OCTOBER 1965

Commentary

VOLUME FORTY, NUMBER FOUR

A WASHINGTON COMMENTARY
Oscar Gass

FROM THE NOISE OF TIME
Osip Mandelstam

JOHNSON AND THE INTELLECTUALS
Henry Fairlie

THE IMAGINATION OF DISASTER
Susan Sontag

ON READING MATTHEW
Milton Himmelfarb

CONSENSUS TELEVISION
Neil Compton

THE SECRET
Isaac Bashevis Singer

AN ANATOMY OF THE KLAN
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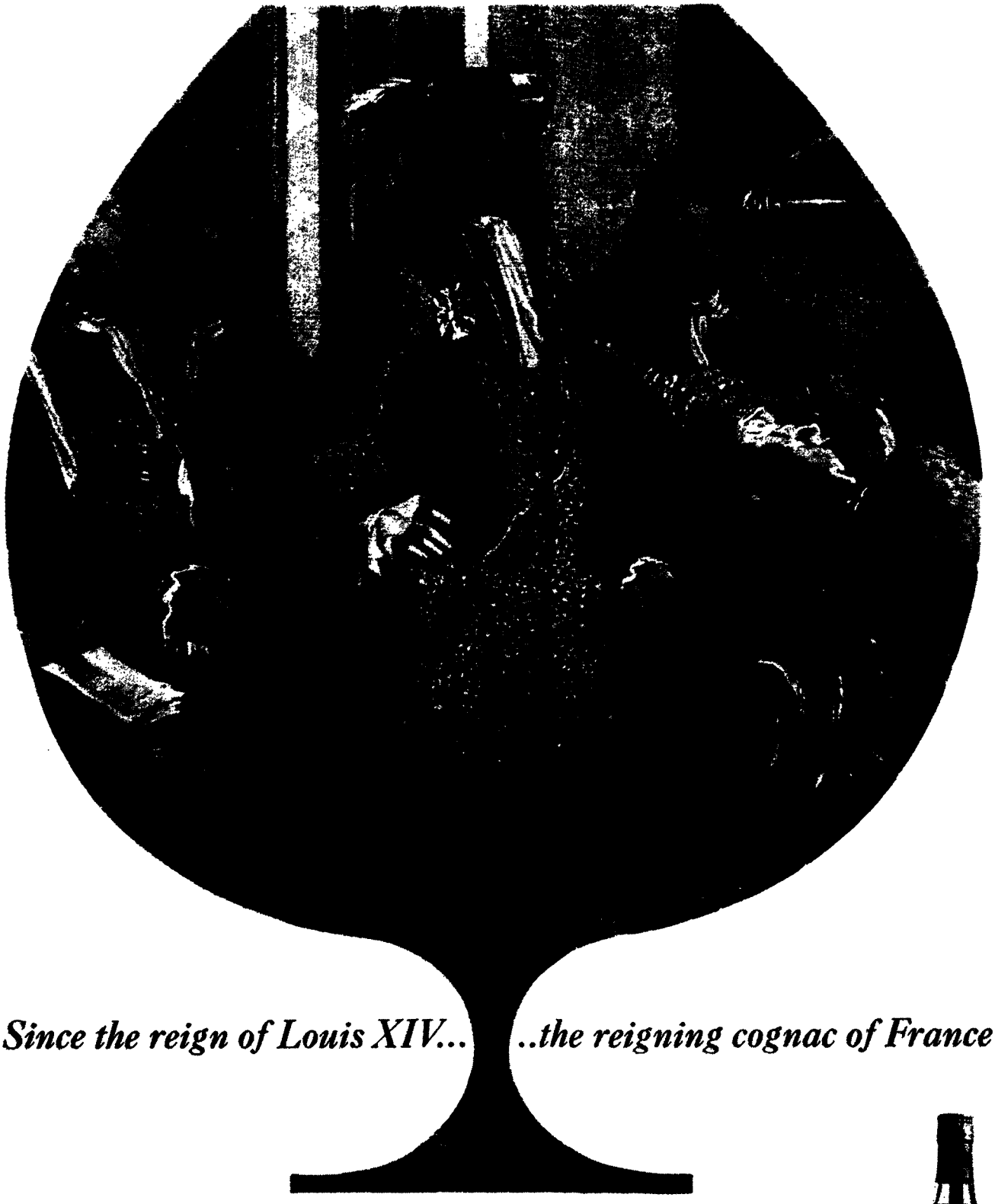

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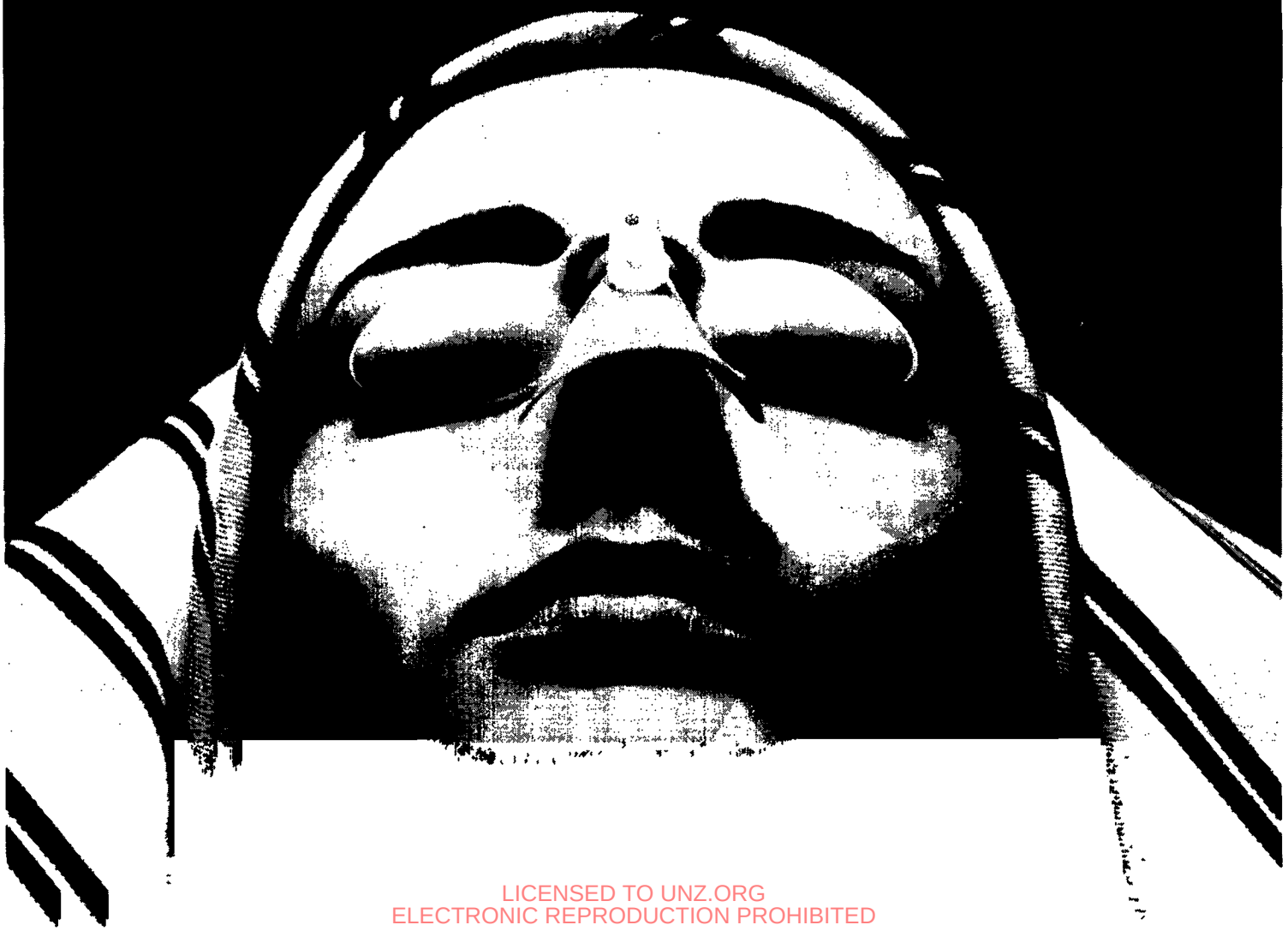

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LETTERS FROM READERS

Menorah Memoirs

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was gratified to read Robert Alter's "Epitaph for a Jewish Magazine" [May] dealing with the *Menorah Journal,* which was edited by my late father, Henry Hurwitz. . . . Mr. Alter showed a sensitive grasp of Menorah's contribution. . . . But he makes three or four points that I believe require comment.

It is true that Menorah from the very first emphasized a cultural approach to Judaism, but I'm not sure it can be characterized as a "non-religious" movement. My father came from an Orthodox background, and though he broke away from its narrow and segregating confines into the atmosphere of humane knowledge and free intellectual inquiry he discovered at Harvard, his Jewish religion remained the underpinning and inspiration . . . for his guidance of the Menorah movement and his editing of the *Menorah Journal*. . . . For him, religion was "the pursuit of significance and worth in human life," and this pursuit became his Menorah quest. . . .

Mr. Alter feels that "the Menorah vision of a humanist renaissance" had "become irrelevant" by 1931 and "the *Menorah Journal* should logically have died at this point." Yet it is hard to believe that a magazine which had stimulated so rich a creative outpouring and so exhilarating a rediscovery of Jewish values should have gone out of existence simply because of the economic and sociological problems set in motion by the Depression, and the preoccupation of some Jewish intellectuals with radical movements. . . . Did the need for encouraging fresh talent and for persuading scholars to write in a manner accessible to educated laymen suddenly come to an end? . . .

Henry Hurwitz retained complete independence from the so-called "Jewish Establishment" for himself and for the *Menorah Journal,* though he paid dearly for it as time went on. With increasing urgency, he called attention to the abuses he saw in the organized Jewish community—especially in raising and allocating philanthropic funds. In addition, as Zionist influence intensified with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, he was almost alone in maintaining an independent position and criticizing Zionist pressures and demands which he considered improper . . . [though] he never questioned the legitimate needs of the fledgling state or the emotional ties of American Jews with their co-religionists in Israel.

In this respect my father was really continuing in the classic position of the founders of Reform Judaism like Geiger, Holdheim, Isaac M. Wise, Kaufmann Kohler, who believed that Israel is no longer a nation in Palestine but a chosen people providentially dispersed throughout the world to carry out a religious mission. For that matter, he was also in the tradition of those who, in 1906, founded the American Jewish Committee, for the most part religious men. . . .

Mr. Alter speaks of the *Menorah Journal*'s "flirtation with the militantly anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism." My father did not agree with the Council in every particular, but neither he nor the Council could accept a *galut* status for American Jewry, or the notions of Ben-Gurion that "those who live outside of Israel may be considered heathens" and that we are "disloyal" to the Jewish people if we do not emigrate to Israel.

We cannot know where the founders of the American Jewish Committee would stand today—men like Judge Mayer Sulzberger, Jacob Schiff, Julius Rosenwald, and Justice Irving Lehman. But we can safely deduce that not all of them would be in the Ben-Gurion camp. . . . Of course World War II and the Holocaust were to come, and we can be sure that . . . they would have given generously of their substance to enable the new state to gather in . . . those who wished or had to settle there. We can be as sure, I believe, that they would have repudiated the more strident demands of Israeli leaders on American Jews. . . .

Yet Henry Hurwitz was not only denounced for his views on fund-raising and on Zionism but financially punished. Menorah was dropped from one combined appeal after another. If the *Menorah Journal* could no longer appear as a bimonthly or even a quarterly—if Mr. Alter senses a decline in "purposeful intellectual activity"—it was because its editor's energies were si-

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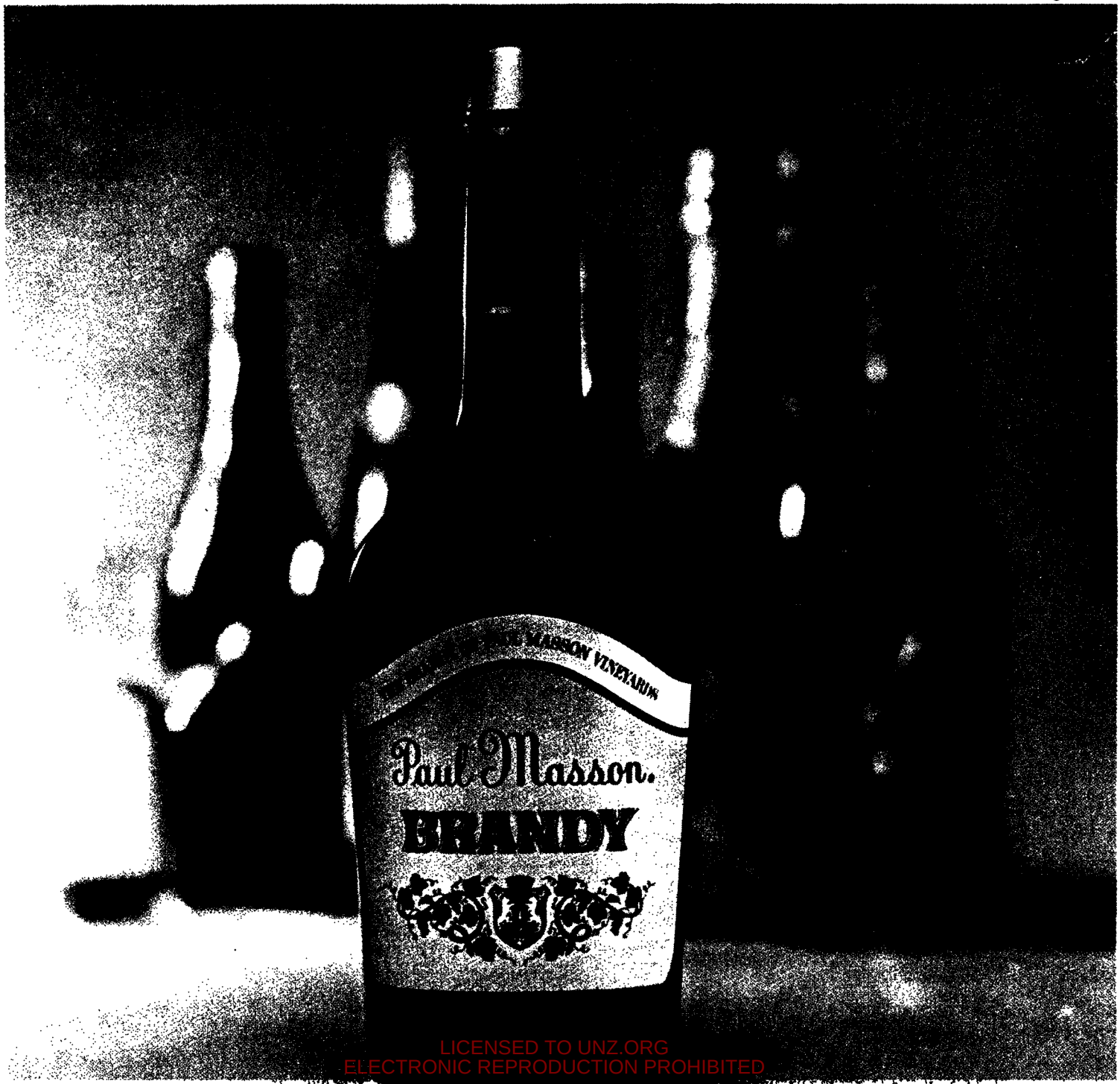

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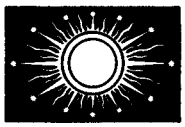

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phoned off in the difficult task of financing the magazine. . . .

After my father's death I received a letter from Sir Leon Simon in which he described him as "a man of warm heart, high ideals and wide sympathies, in whom intellectual power of a high order was happily blended with aesthetic sensibility, and devotion to Jewry and Judaism went along with a catholic humanism. . . ." I think it is too bad that a man of my father's stature had to waste his time and talents on the struggle to raise the modest funds necessary to keep a rare and precious magazine going. Had the American Jewish community given this unique cultural institution a minimum degree of support, it might not have been necessary to write an epitaph for the *Menorah Journal.*

DAVID L. HURWOOD
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Alter's reflections on the *Menorah Journal* showed his usual perceptiveness in evaluating Jewish and secular cultural contributions and paid tribute to a fine institution now gone. It is a shame that the Jewish intellectuals today do not have a single forum to fill the place of the defunct *Journal.* COMMENTARY, of course, is making some effort. . . .

SUSAN AURELIA GITELSON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Mr. Alter is puzzled about why "after the brilliant flare of activity of its first fifteen years, . . . [the *Menorah Journal*] was to flicker through a strange half-light for three decades. . . ." The essential answer is the personal editorship of Elliot E. Cohen during those first fifteen years. When he departed, the life of the magazine departed. . . .

Elliot Cohen was essentially an anti-Establishment man. He gave room to Establishment and semi-Establishment figures in the magazine, but mainly on his own terms. . . . He tore their articles apart, and shamed the authors into making something new out of them with the invaluable help . . . of the late Herbert Solow, whose . . . decisive role as an editor goes unmentioned in Mr. Alter's article. . . .

Many a chagrined contributor blamed this rewriting on the fact that Elliot Cohen was a writer *manqué.* I think they failed to understand . . . his conception of how to create a really good magazine. . . . He was convinced that . . . the answer was to get the best contributions you could, but that a great many of them would inevitably have to be thoroughly edited and rewritten. He did not apply this formula to literary magazines, but only to those grappling with the world of fact and opinion. . . .

Another source of the vitality of the magazine was Elliot Cohen's ability to seize upon unwary young Jewish intellectuals. My own case is not atypical. I came into the *Menorah Journal* office for the first time to take Cohen's secretary out to lunch; I was still an undergraduate. When he fixed his eye on me, I insisted I had no interest in a Jewish magazine or in Jewish life. All right, then, would I review books by (Jewish) authors on non-Jewish subjects? What about writing the story of Brownsville, where I grew up? Why not apply to a biennial convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations the method of reportage in depth that interested me, as a mirror of one kind of life in America today? I wrote all these and more, while still protesting my lack of interest, . . . then woke up one day to realize that I owed to Elliot Cohen my professional training as a writer and editor. I have no doubt that Lionel Trilling and many others felt the same obligation.

I do not think the achievement of the *Menorah Journal,* 1915-1930, is to be explained primarily in terms of an idea or a group or a time. The main explanation is the editorship of Elliot E. Cohen.

FELIX MORROW
New York City

Muñoz's Achievement

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Keith Botsford's "A Farewell to Muñoz Marin" [June] is as sour and grudging a tribute to a great man and a great people as will be seen for a long time.

. . . What is perhaps most false in the article is Botsford's attempt to assign credit for Puerto Rico's development to its ties with the United States. This claim is similar to crediting Israel's economic success to the financial support of the international Jewish community, but the fact that both claims are often made does not make them true. In the case of Puerto Rico, the error ignores Puerto Rico's prior association with the United States—a forty-year period which

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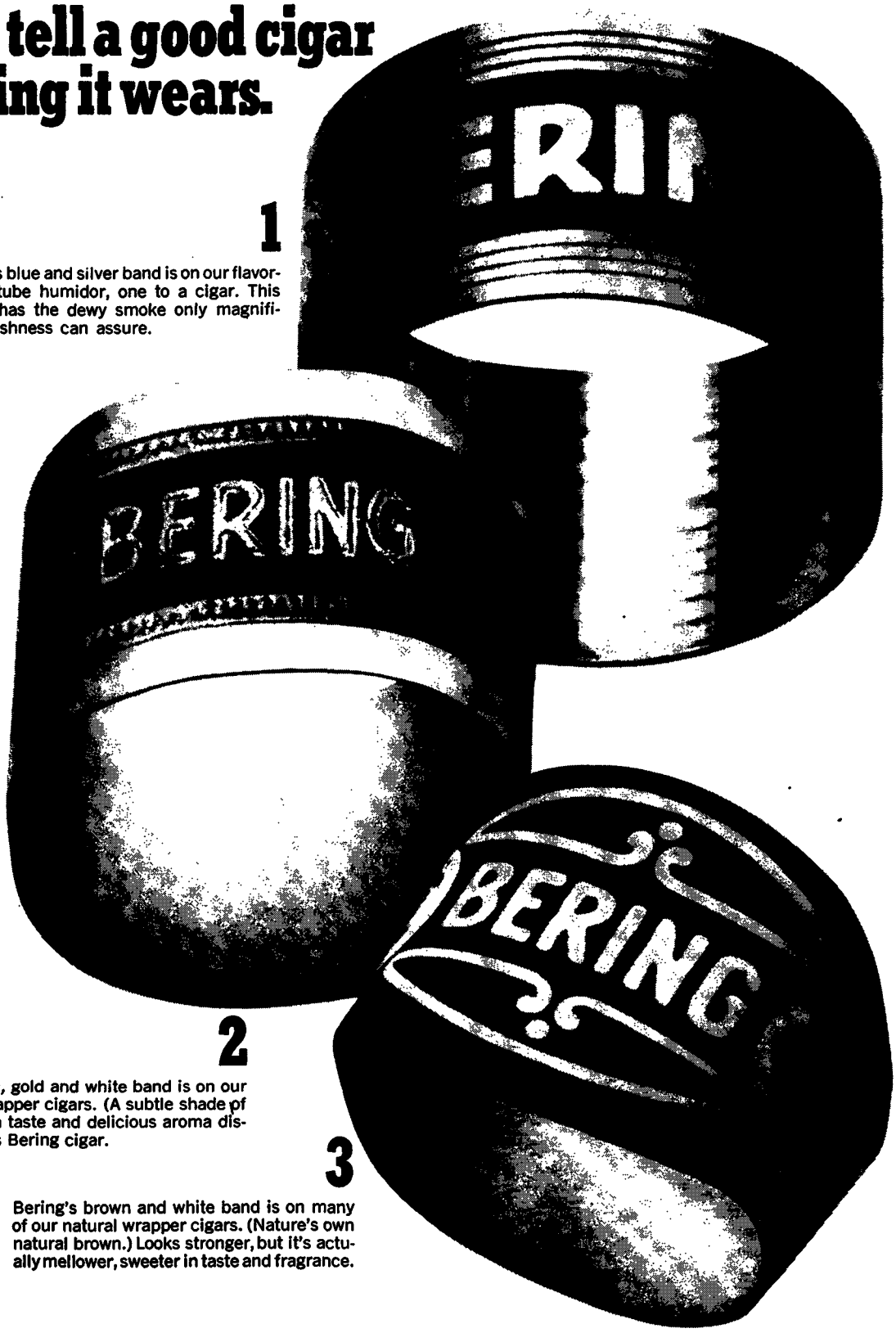

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turned the country into the demographers' favorite example of a hopeless society. It was not until after this period—in the course of twenty-five years of Muñoz Marin's leadership—that Puerto Rico made a breakthrough into the modern world. . . .

Worse, even, is Botsford's denial of the relevance of Puerto Rico for the rest of the world. The price which Puerto Rico has paid for entry into the modern world, will have to be paid by other countries also. Part of the price is political autonomy, the other part is cultural integrity. Attempts to disguise or to avoid this truth will only increase the price in the end; countries that hold out too long are likely to find themselves and their cultures unrepresented in the coming industrial era. The genius of Muñoz Marin and of Puerto Rico was to recognize that there is a social, as well as a religious truth, in the saying that "only he who loses his life shall save it." Botsford does the world small service by . . . denigrating their example.

EVERETT REIMER
Department of Public Education
Hato Rey, Puerto Rico

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Keith Botsford's article . . . misrepresents Puerto Rico but represents all too well a generic misunderstanding of the Puerto Rican situation. It is also rather offensive in that it considerably understates the achievements of the Puerto Rican Commonwealth during the years in which Muñoz Marin was its leader. . . .

When I first served as Assistant to the Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico, some years before Botsford came to the island, I felt much as he did—but at that time I had never taken part in any state government, I had never visited a state university, I was almost unaware of the situation in comparable areas like Newfoundland, Quebec, Jamaica, New Mexico, British Guiana, etc.

When I returned to Puerto Rico some seventeen years later, to serve again temporarily as Assistant to the same Chancellor, I had spent many of the intervening years in contact with state politics, particulary in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Missouri, but also in a number of other states; I had taught at Florida and at Howard, and visited state universities as well. What amazed me most about Puerto Rico was the superiority of its government to that of most of the states which I knew . . . in regard to professional competence, dedication, simple honesty, and growth in many areas not necessarily related to Operation Bootstrap at all.

. . . In common with most critics of Puerto Rico, Botsford chooses to judge it by the standards of the university man's idea of government and of the internationally known university. But even in places like Harvard and M.I.T., there are times when one chooses, not the best Dean or even a good Dean, but the best one available. . . .

The Puerto Rican Commissioners and Deans and gubernatorial staff compare very favorably with those in Connecticut or New York . . . and are superior in one rather important respect—they have, many of them, a long-term dedication to the island and the people, whereas the best people in New York and Connecticut are technical professionals, who may move out and up any day. I suspect, too, that the best people in Puerto Rico have a little more general culture than their counterparts even in these States, though the level of culture is diminishing in both places.

For an entity which twenty-five years ago had almost every conceivable economic disadvantage and only a handful of trained professionals, the achievement of Puerto Rico is indeed remarkable; more seems called for at the time of Muñoz's retirement than the very tepid and half-hearted praise which Botsford gives.

LEWIS A. DEXTER
Belmont, Massachusetts

MR. BOTSFORD writes:

I have no quarrel with either correspondent; anything written about Puerto Rico invariably offends someone.

To Mr. Reimer, I can only say that though Muñoz Marin deserves every credit for seeking the partnership of the United States in development, it remains true that without that partnership and the special relation implied by the *Estado Libre Asociado*, his efforts might have failed. That special relation is not available to much of the rest of the world.

To Mr. Dexter: even without the direct experience he cites, I am aware of the efficiency, and more particularly the honesty, of Puerto Rican government. My point was that it is a small island and has relatively little to draw on; that its smallness intensifies the importance

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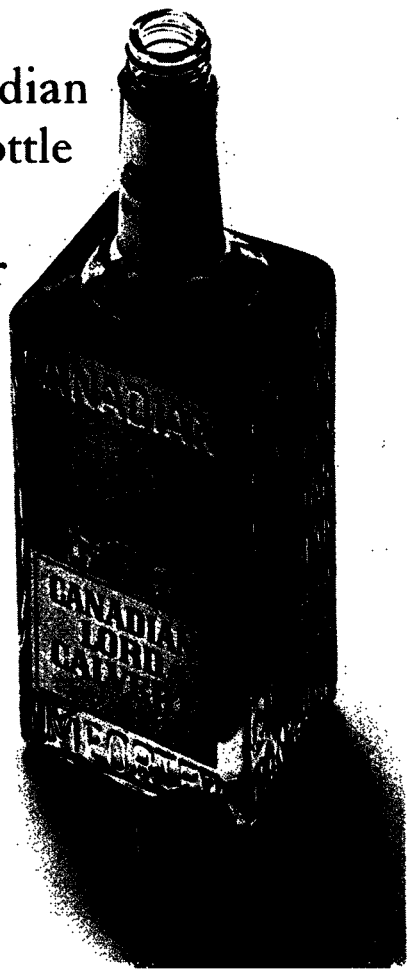

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of rivalries (whether political or personal) that might elsewhere pass unperceived; and that its future, in my personal opinion, does not lie in artificial recreations of a "native" culture.

I regret if to either correspondent I seemed "tepid" or "denigrating," for Muñoz's achievement has my admiration and respect.

Protest or Politics?

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Since the Harlem riots of 1964 and the Democratic National Convention at Atlantic City, Bayard Rustin has shown himself to be more and more out of step with the masses of people he purports to understand and lead. It almost seems that he is now an official civil-rights ambassador for the Johnson administration. In his last two articles for COMMENTARY ["From Protest to Politics," February; "Johnson So Far—II: Civil Rights," June] the second of which was co-authored with Tom Kahn, Mr. Rustin calls for a new coalition, excluding business, to replace the now dismantled Roosevelt coalition of labor, minority groups, and liberal forces. This repeated call for a new coalition reflects the fact that while Mr. Rustin may not have lost the power to tell the truth, he may, more tragically, have lost the power to recognize truth. . . .

Mr. Rustin talks of consolidating the gains of the Negro revolt. What gains? Civil-rights laws without enforcement power and pious rhetoric. What gains—when racial segregation in housing is increasing North as well as South? What gains—when de facto school segregation is not even discussed in most Northern communities, when the Negro unemployment rate is on the increase, when police brutality without citizen review is a fact, when ghetto exploitation is a rule—not an exception? While Mr. Rustin talks of random acts of brutality, the actual figures show that 35 professional civil righters have been killed since 1960 and only *one self-confessed* white person has been convicted of manslaughter. . . . How can gains be accomplished in a framework of profitable, planned social chaos?

Maybe the "gains" Mr. Rustin refers to are the fact that the Negro middle class, those most acrobatic of souls, have achieved the right to go to a restaurant, or buy a hamburger, or even vote. The right to vote is somewhat tarnished perhaps, because the Negro has merely won the right to choose between a party that doesn't want him or one which can't stand him.

The truth that Mr. Rustin cannot face is the fact that the so-called Negro revolt or reform hasn't achieved a damn thing. It has *barely* scratched the surface . . . but has not gotten to the heart of the question—that question is: can a stagnating economic and political system, eroded by racism, let the Negro live as a free man?

Mr. Rustin feels that it is significant that Johnson has proclaimed —"We Shall Overcome." Who and what does the Johnson administration plan to overcome? How can the Johnson administration overcome when American society lacks the institutional means, the intellectual insight, and the constitutional guts to achieve the goals necessary to overcome social problems? In the U.S. as in the rest of the world, Uncle Sam is standing still, bragging about his present good life and fortune. . . .

In summary I must ask, whatever happened to Bayard Rustin, brilliant tactician of the civil-rights movement? . . .

C. E. WILSON
Associate Editor
The Liberator
New York City

MR. RUSTIN *writes*:

Mr. Wilson apparently belongs to that school of thought, now reviving, which believes that those who disagree with them are agents of the "Establishment." I am neither an official nor an unofficial "civil-rights ambassador for the Johnson administration."

Nor do I need Mr. Wilson to tell me about housing and school segregation, increasing Negro unemployment, and the rest. My February COMMENTARY article emphasized "the rise of de facto segregation in our most fundamental socio-economic institutions," as Mr. Wilson would remember had he troubled himself to read one of the articles he attacks.

His real gripe is that, having pointed to the radical nature of the obstacles to Negro freedom, I do not lose myself in the apocalyptic visions of LeRoi Jones or in pseudo-radical ravings about the hopelessness of the situation, the irremediable corruption of white society, etc.

Far from refuting my argument, Mr. Wilson is a perfect example of what I called the "no-win" tend-

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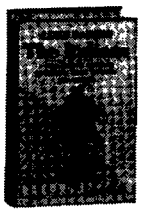

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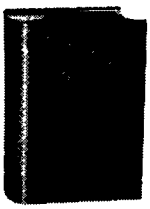

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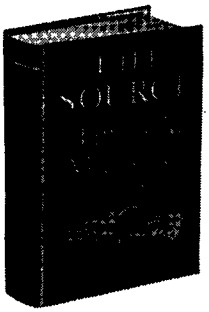

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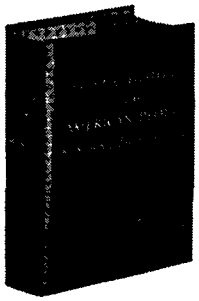

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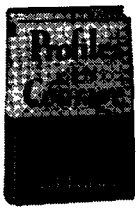

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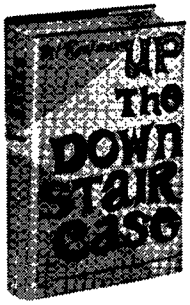

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ency in the civil-rights movement. He is convinced that the society is too corrupt and deficient, intellectually, institutionally, and constitutionally, to permit racial equality. So what do we do, Mr. Wilson? Your quarrel is not with me or the strategy of coalition. Your fight is with the Freedom Riders, with SNCC, CORE, and the whole civil-rights movement—with everyone who struggles hopefully and is not content with private rhetorical catharsis.

So the Negro revolt "hasn't achieved a damn thing"? Tell that, why don't you, to the friends and relatives of the 35 who have given their lives to that hopeless and wasted cause!

Johnny & the Primers, *Cont'd.*

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It ought to be a cause for sadness that it was not a practicing English teacher who offered the brave and brilliant analysis of "The American Reading Problem" [June]. Mrs. Fraiberg has exposed many of the . . . conditions that make it difficult for some teachers to see what has gone wrong and make others fearful of speaking out. . . . Her assumption that the appreciation of great literature and the ability to work well with language are the supreme goal of English programs will probably irritate many people. . . .

Real reform will not take place until Mrs. Fraiberg's evidence that most children can learn to read well is accepted; I suspect that today a reformer would be scorned . . . for believing it realistic to expect most children to be comfortable with good literature. Such a belief is usually labeled fantasy and killed with courses in curriculum. Yet many teachers would support such a reformer, and the efforts of the NCTE may be useful in strengthening and making more effective this "fifth column". . . .

GRACE KESTENMAN BARUCH
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mrs. Fraiberg's article has left me in a state of perplexity. . . . Is the author suggesting that schoolchildren should not be expected to reflect the cultural values of the United States of the mid-1960's?

Mrs. Fraiberg has ably pointed out that the school stands virtually isolated in combating illiteracy. We are a mass-culture, mass-media people today. Where families once read together, they now watch television together. Where families once honored and supported their children's teachers, . . . they now challenge and defy and criticize them—in their children's presence. Whereas scholarship was once revered for its own sake, parents often look dubious today when a child professes interest in non-"practical" subjects. . . .

The American reading problem is a national problem. What needs or uses does an adult have for reading in his daily life? At his job he must do a certain amount of reading but it is technical, related to a specific line of work. Socially, the telephone has obviated the need for much letter writing or reading. And if, after hearing the news on radio or television, one still wants a newspaper, one can find one whose vocabulary is not too demanding. . . . Within this cultural setting, the teaching of reading, a highly complex process involving all human faculties, becomes more difficult than ever. . . .

When children *do* read, they are often criticized for their choices: Why do they read about astronauts? . . . Why, the critics want to know, don't they read *Treasure Island*? I wonder what reason most grown-ups have for suggesting certain classics to children which they themselves on rereading would often find stilted. . . . Many classics, to be sure, are as appealing as ever, but today's space-age child has been born into a world whose problems . . . are as familiar as his home, school, and community. He has seen an American President shot, at almost the minute it happened; he has seen a Pope crowned while it was happening; he has seen an astronaut walking in space; he has seen sit-ins and swim-ins and stand-ins. In short his world, or rather his universe, is much greater than was that of his elders. . . .

Instead of using the "reading problem" as a sensational spitball to throw at American teachers, let us analyze the uses and abuses of literacy within the context of our broad social patterns. . . .

RUTH PERLMAN KLEBANER
Department of Education
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . While I agree with Mrs. Fraiberg's diagnosis . . . of our primers, and with her plea for early mastery of the mechanics of reading, she seems in several instances

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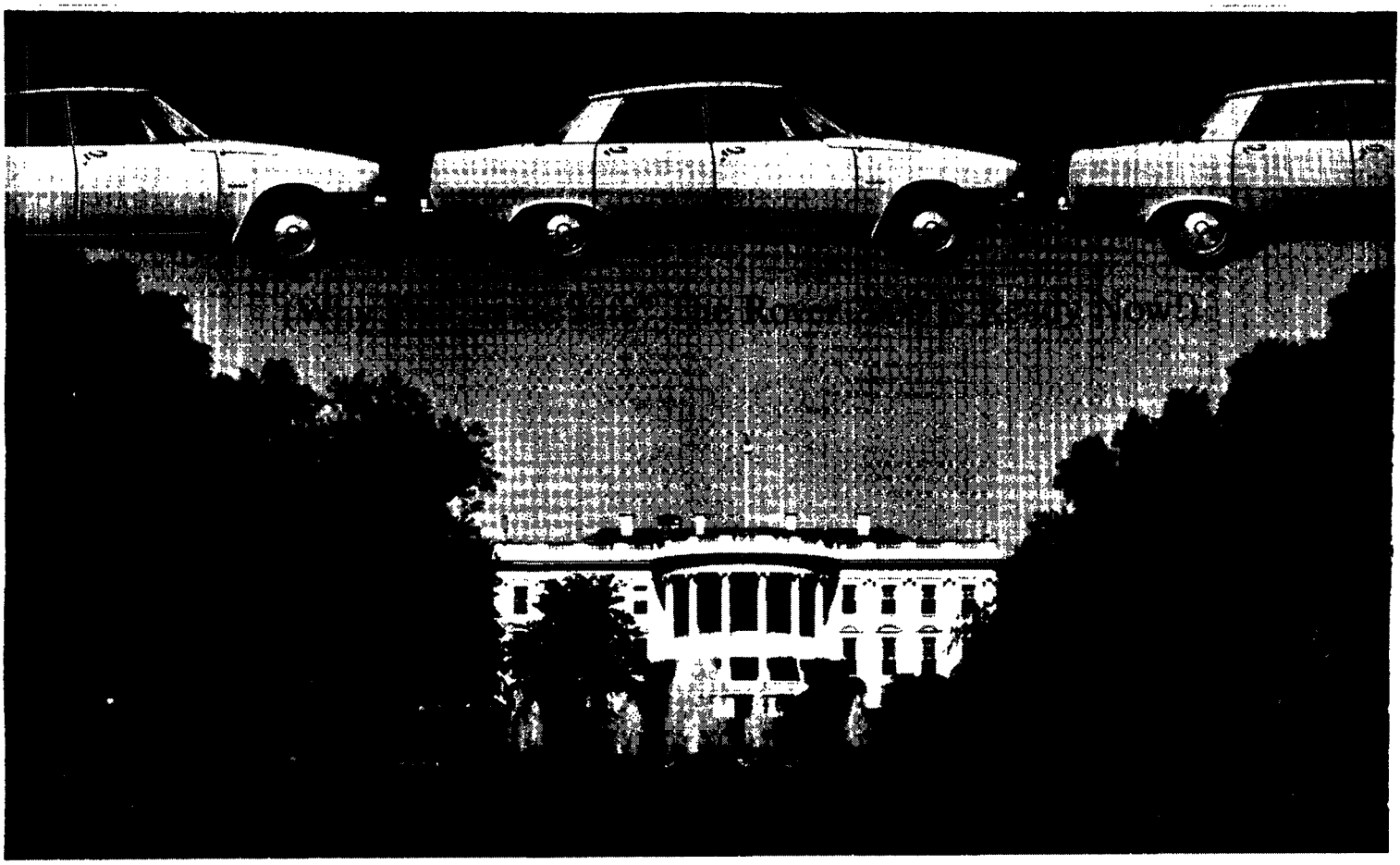

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1) We have been thinking about the Government's news release, reported at length in a Times of New York dispatch (1 July 1965) under the headline: "U.S. Outlines Car Safety Standards."

2) It went on to say that "The General Services Administration, the Government's official shopper" has drawn up a list of safety features that it will demand in the 38,000 1967 cars it will buy.

3) We don't imagine that the Government intends to walk or take trams until 1967, but apparently it *will* be making-do with cars that aren't up to safety standards.

4) Why wait to be safe? The Rover 2000 Sports Sedan *is available right now.** And frankly we'd like the business.

5) However, we realize that a U.S. Government purchasing agency might not be authorized to buy 38,000 cars from a British maker without an O.K. from someone higher up. Which is why we are approaching you, whoever you may be.

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members are akin to the "roll-bar" of a racing car, and for the same conservative reason.

8) The outside, or beautiful, body is made up of nineteen panels which may be replaced *individually* in case of abrasion.

9) Which brings us to this: Supposing worse comes to worst and one of the 38,000 has an accident?

10) If fate conspires against a 2000's rear fender, say, it takes but $32.00 plus 45 minutes labor to replace it with a new one. And the Government rolls again! (In a pinch it is not necessary to stay these couriers—or whoever—from their appointed rounds at all. Just leave the ailing panel at the shop, take off, and come back later. This is the same principle that enables you to get your pants pressed without leaving your body at the cleaner's overnight.)

11) Lest you have a slight reservation that a "Sports Sedan" might be a trifle cramped in the interior or prodigal with fuel, recall that Car and Driver named the 2000 the "Car of the Year" not only for its remarkable handling but for its amplitude.

12) As to economy, the 2000's 30 miles per gallon is the automotive equivalent of only one night light in the White House.

13) Look, Sir, if you haven't roadtested a 2000 Sports Sedan yourself why don't you call your nearest Rover dealer? Or better still, just drop in and surprise him.

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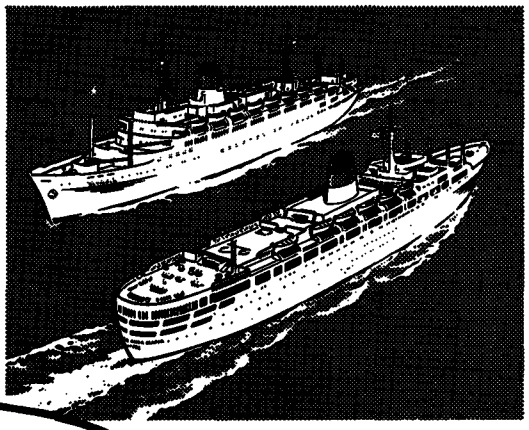

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merely to be hopping on the bandwagon that the Luce magazines set rolling years ago. Although this does not invalidate her researches, I would have thought that little Ivan . . . had become old hat by now to anyone familiar with even the mass-media reportage on the subject. As a friend of mine who is a student of Russian remarked, "the Russian language *is easier* to read than English." . . . How important actually is the type of primer used in the early grades in the long run? Because it is so easy to criticize our primers on aesthetic grounds, . . . this harping on them may be a way of overlooking problems in our educational system that are a lot less easy to solve. (Many parents I know, including myself, who thought deep down that their children were made of finer clay, are appalled to learn that their infant savants love nothing more than those awful Board of Education issues in their beginning years of school). . . .

I think in one respect Mrs. Fraiberg is being a little hard on our elementary schools. Whatever the limitations of their academic training, most of the teachers I have observed or heard about seem to bend over backward in their efforts to get their young students out of the primers and on to real books. In both public and private schools, in areas privileged and depressed, youngsters are urged to use the public library—in many cases in first grade, or at least by the second grade. Teachers at least work toward having a small classroom library even in kindergarten, and, if I am not mistaken, its absence would signify lack of money, rather than lack of awareness of the importance of supplementing their pupils' reading. Mrs. Fraiberg censures public schools because they usually start the study of phonics seriously in the second grade; yet thousands of our children read beyond the level of their primers long before the sixth grade.

That children in deprived areas generally do not do so involves many factors, as Mrs. Fraiberg pointed out, but at best the study of phonics must be for these children one small factor in remedying the terrible educational prognosis for this group. . . .

In conclusion, a frivolous note—which may, however, be pertinent to Mrs. Fraiberg's welcome thesis that one of the goals of teaching reading should be an addiction to books. I was once a child book ad-

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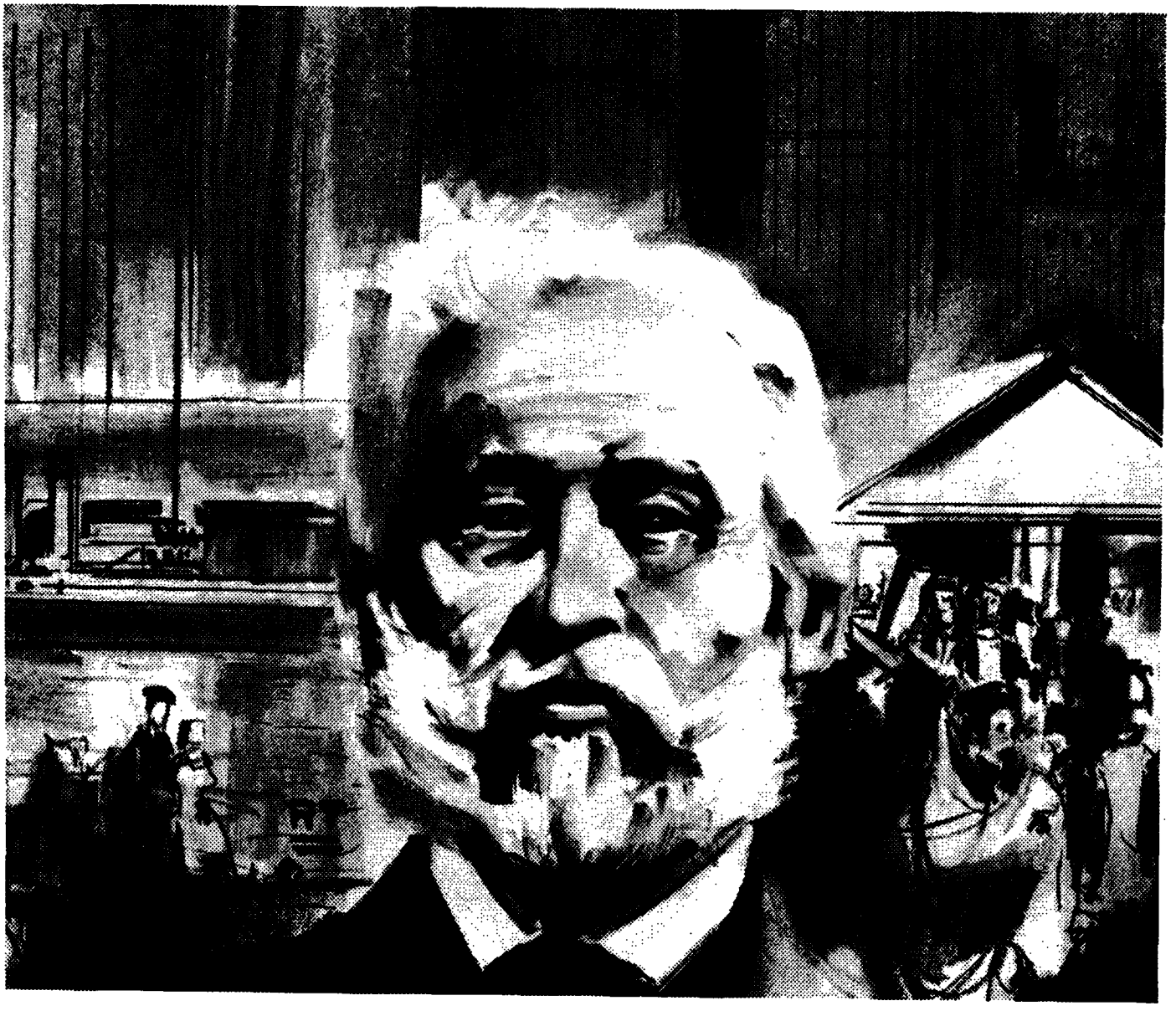

The Scholar

Scholarship has always played a leading role in the Jewish ethic, but even in that tradition Michael Heilprin's scholarly attainments were extraordinary.

Born in Russia in 1823, Heilprin emigrated to Hungary and became a fighter for freedom in the 1848 revolution. When the revolution was suppressed, he was forced to flee and emigrated to the United States.

While earning a scant living as a teacher, Heilprin made the acquaintance of the editors of Appleton's *New American Cyclopedia*. Impressed by his learning, his photographic memory and his knowledge of 12 languages, they offered him the job of editor. In addition to writing many of the leading articles for the cyclopedia, Heilprin revised and edited all historical, geographical and biographical items, an incredible feat when contrasted with the staffs of editors and specialists compiling modern encyclopedias.

Heilprin also became an editor of *The Nation*. He was the author of *The Historical Poetry of the Ancient Hebrews*. A passionate advocate of liberty, he became an outspoken foe of slavery. In this connection, he wrote scholarly articles refuting the view that slavery was justified by the Old Testament.

When, after the pogroms of 1880, thousands of Russian Jews emigrated, the scholar became an organizer. Heilprin established Jewish agricultural colonies in New Jersey as well as in Kansas, Oregon and the Dakotas. Largely through his efforts the Hebrew Emigrant Society came into being.

The outstanding non-theological Jewish scholar in America in the nineteenth century, Michael Heilprin died in 1892.

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dict and I see many children in my day-to-day life. I have noticed that if there's one thing most children will go for, it's a nice, luscious piece of trashy "kiddy lit," by which I mean those lovely series books like the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew. In New York City, at least, the librarians have banished them from their shelves. . . . I have no statistics to show that youngsters nurtured on Tom Swift reach Faulkner or Baudelaire more readily or rapidly than those reared on Newberry winners, . . . but I think that our educators have failed to credit the importance of "meretricious" literature in developing a child's feeling that books are where the fun is.

BARBARA HATCHER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her excellent article . . . Mrs. Fraiberg states quite correctly that "Those methods of reading instruction that give early mastery of mechanics and make way for the lure of the story at the earliest possible stage have the greatest potential for creating readers."

In this connection, it would have been of interest to make reference to the 44-character Initial Teaching Alphabet (i/t/a), originated in England by Sir James Pitman. This new medium is currently being used experimentally in reading instruction programs across the country and there is already evidence to indicate that students studying in the i/t/a medium demonstrate higher development in reading and creative writing than do those using the conventional alphabet. In addition to normal school settings, i/t/a is also being used in the reading programs for remedial-reading subjects, high school dropouts, foreign and illiterate adults, the deaf, the mentally retarded, and the perceptually handicapped.

LOUIS NULMAN
National Society for
Hebrew Day Schools
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . As a plea for better reading instruction and the replacement of readers with real books, Mrs. Fraiberg's essay might have been very useful. Unfortunately, however, her arguments are weakened by her attacks on the American school system in terms of Soviet educational techniques and theories of learning current on Morningside Heights twenty years ago. . . . The most serious flaw in her analysis is her failure to mention the individualized . . . or free reading programs which are educators' answers to the problems she points out.

The inadequacies of basal readers were noticed by elementary- and secondary-school teachers in the 20's, at which time Lou LaBrant's work at the Ohio State experimental high school led to the formulation of programs for grades one through twelve. The heart of his system, still in effect, is self-selection; students select both fiction and non-fiction books at their local libraries, often guided by lists of recommended reading, but with the freedom to choose any books in the order and number desired. Each student reads his own book at his own pace. The teacher is constantly involved with hearing individual children read aloud, teaching phonic and other word-attack skills in context to each child when he is ready for them. This is the human-centered approach Miss Fraiberg asks for and it is being used by elementary and high school teachers now. . . .

The superiority of this program over a system like the one used in the Soviet Union is obvious—it avoids the conversion of literary works into "assignments." Instead of . . . dispensing literature in prescribed doses to be taken in specific quantity at specified times, this approach assumes that the inherent interest of a certain literary work is great enough to involve readers in it. . . .

While it is fashionable to assume that professionals in the field are the last to face the problems of education, the work done by educators in this area in the last decade is too valuable to be overlooked. The New York City Board of Education published a 158-page research report on the subject in October 1960, copies of which are available on request; dissertations and monographs on individualized reading are available at university libraries; finally, some particularly careful research . . . has been done at Teachers College of Columbia University. . . .

MRS. ARNOLD RICHARDS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Selma Fraiberg's otherwise excellent article does not touch on the important question of how well present-day reading instruction in English prepares students for learning foreign languages. While taking an evening course in elementary Italian at one of New York City's institutions of higher learning, I recently had occasion to observe how persons trained to read their own tongue by the "look-see" method tackle another. It was a pitiful sight.

Italian is a fair test if any language is, because its orthography is marvelously simple and logical. More often than in most European languages, a given letter or combination of letters consistently stands for the same sound. The equations between sounds and let-

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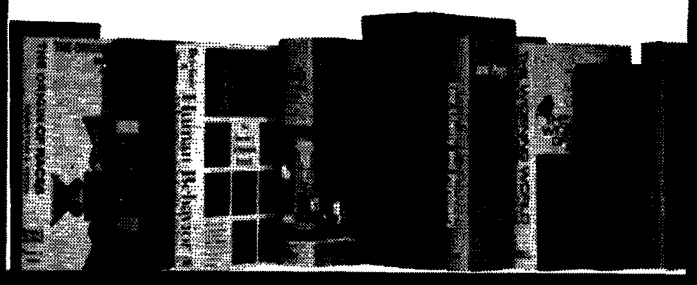

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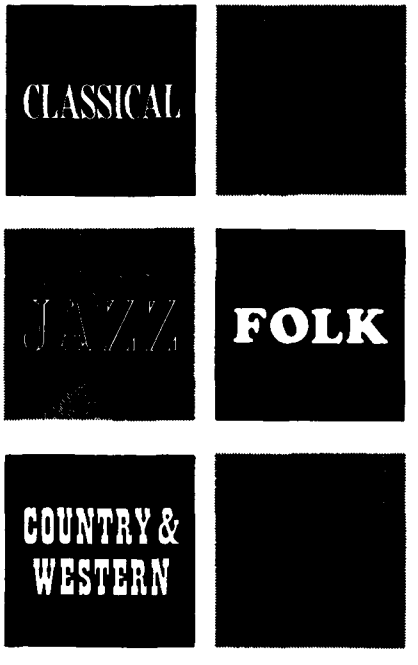

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ters can be memorized in an hour or two, after which the veriest tyro should be ready to read any Italian text with roughly correct pronunciation—simply by going through each word letter by letter.

But the majority of my fellow tyros—all or most of them high-school graduates—evidently had never acquired the knack of looking at words letter by letter. All they could do with a written or printed Italian word was to absorb it as a vague *Gestalt*, blurt it out hit-or-miss style and hope for the best. They seemed hardly conscious that individual letters could be equated with individual sounds—let alone that such equations might be different, and more consistent, in a foreign language.

Halfway through the course, many students were still sounding letters and letter combinations with their English instead of their Italian values—not infrequently in jumbled sequence. Analogies—the greatest timesaver in the learning of languages—continued to elude them; they either did not notice or did not believe that if you can pronounce *giornalista* you can automatically pronounce [words like] *giornale, giorno* and, for that matter, *lista*.

The orthography of English is so chaotic that someone who has mastered it should find it a breeze to learn the sound values of rationally spelled languages like Italian or Spanish. Instead, judging by my casual impressions, the "look-see" teaching of English unfits people for such learning, and thus helps perpetuate the proverbial linguistic incompetence of Americans. If this aspect of "look-see" has not been scientifically investigated, it ought to be.

GEORGE SALOMON
Great Neck, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I agree with Mrs. Fraiberg that far-reaching structural changes are needed in our educational system; yet on the basis of a year of teacher training and a year and a half of substitute teaching before returning to work on a doctorate in sociology, I suggest that the teacher-training system results in the survival of the unfittest, and that an unbridgeable gap exists between the "educational" and the intellectual communities. . . .

In no other academic discipline is the *Phaedo* considered a cautionary tale. No wonder they use excerpts from the *Reader's Digest* for classroom study and destroy the meter of poetry selections included in "literature" anthologies in order to delete references to sex. Aside from the few students who are hip enough to play the game through their education training and student teaching and until such time as they get their tenure, anyone with integrity and commitment to the values and goals urged by Dr. Fraiberg . . . will leave in disgust.

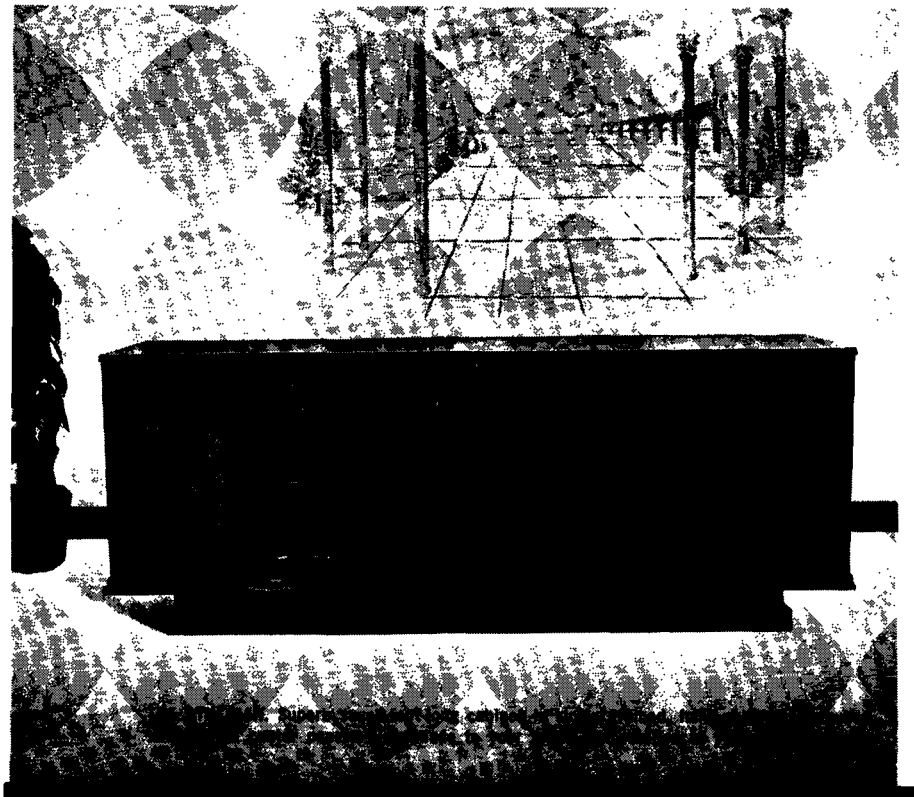
It is not a question of teaching phonics. It is a question of having the same standards of academic freedom in the public schools that we have in the colleges if we want literature to be taught. It is not a question of in-service education or intensive summer school training for those who have already passed through the sieve of teacher training. It is one of getting the liberal-arts majors with love for their fields into schools where the spirit of free inquiry is allowed to reign.

PAULINE B. BART
Culver City, California

Round Three

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Knowing the pugnacious hero-worship that B. H. Haggin inspires, I was not surprised either



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by the number or the fervor of the negative responses to my review of his *Music Observed* ["Letters from Readers," September]. But I was, I confess, astonished by the strategy of rebuttal, which was in almost every case to deny any validity to my argument by simply asserting that my accusations were either groundless or grounded in malice. The imputation of evil to the heretic is, of course, the common practice of all zealots and idolaters; but when the sacred cow is a music critic and the heresy a book review, such thunderous denunciations become preposterous. No music critic has been more severe than B. H. Haggin in castigating whatever displeased him. His indictments, however devastating, are applauded by his readers as serving the highest moral purposes; but criticism by other writers of Haggin in a similar mode is automatically construed as slander, concealing some ulterior motive.

As for the charge that my review contained errors of fact, this is simply the tactic of a practiced debater who ignores the substantial accuracy of a generalization in order to exploit some paltry exception. To illustrate this technique so extensively employed by Mr. Haggin's Philadelphia lawyers in their remarkably similar briefs (which took up roughly twice as much space as my review), let me expand on one of the most hotly contested assertions in my review.

When I wrote that Haggin had "ignored jazz (except to use it as a stalking horse to attack other critics)," the only reservation that occurred to me was the possible argument that it was no part of the business of a critic of classical music to write about jazz. Certainly it never entered my mind that anyone would dare to hold B. H. Haggin up as a jazz critic. Yet so great is the infatuation of the perfect Hagginite that even in this area the letter-writers insisted their hero had been dealt with unjustly.

Now, consider the facts: over a forty-year period that comprises virtually the entire history of jazz —a history that has inspired hundreds of books and thousands of articles—what has B. H. Haggin contributed? He has, to the best of my knowledge, written and published (and republished) two little articles: one a very sentimental notice of Bix Beiderbecke (who died in 1931), and an essay only nominally concerned with jazz but actually an attack on the values and predilections of musicologists. In *The Listener's Musical Companion*, one of Haggin's record guides, there is also a brief chapter of five pages containing what I must describe as a dilettante's impressions of certain popular musicians, some of them not even authentic jazz artists. This with perhaps one or two fugitive pieces is the grand total of B. H. Haggin's criticism of what is certainly America's most important indigenous music.

The case is much the same with the other objections to my review: against my overall characterization of Haggin's criticism as centered primarily upon performance; fixated on plastic rather than on poetic values (how that word jars on an ear accustomed to nice antiseptic phrases like "tensile strength," "sharply contoured," "powerfully inflected"); conservative in taste and unadventurous in scope, Haggin's defenders, ransacking the indices to his books, pile up impressive-looking references that represent in reality nothing more than a random comment here, an occasional deviation from customary practice there—in short, every discoverable exception however rare or insignificant. . . .

Yet in my review I was not primarily criticizing Mr. Haggin's taste; in large part, I share it. But for the purposes of criticism and for the education of the public, which is the function of criticism, a "taste" that is not rationalized and grounded in defensible esthetic criteria is both useless and in danger of deteriorating into mere whim. . . .

ALBERT GOLDMAN
New York City

Correction

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. Leo Skir, who writes in to complain of your reviewer's ignorance of the writings of Jean Genet, is not very well informed on this subject himself. ["Letters from Readers," August] Genet has written five not four plays and four not two novels—if you count *Le Miracle de la Rose*, which I imagine lies somewhere between fiction and fact—as well as a volume of poems and several essays, sometimes published in the volumes with his plays.

EDMUND WILSON
Wellfleet, Massachusetts

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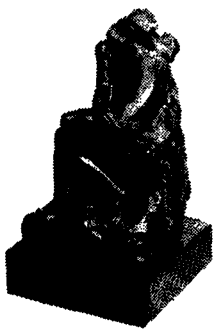

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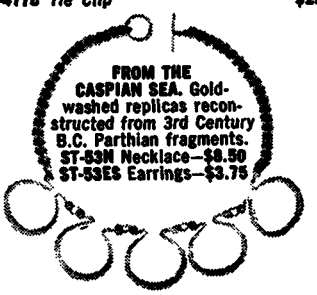

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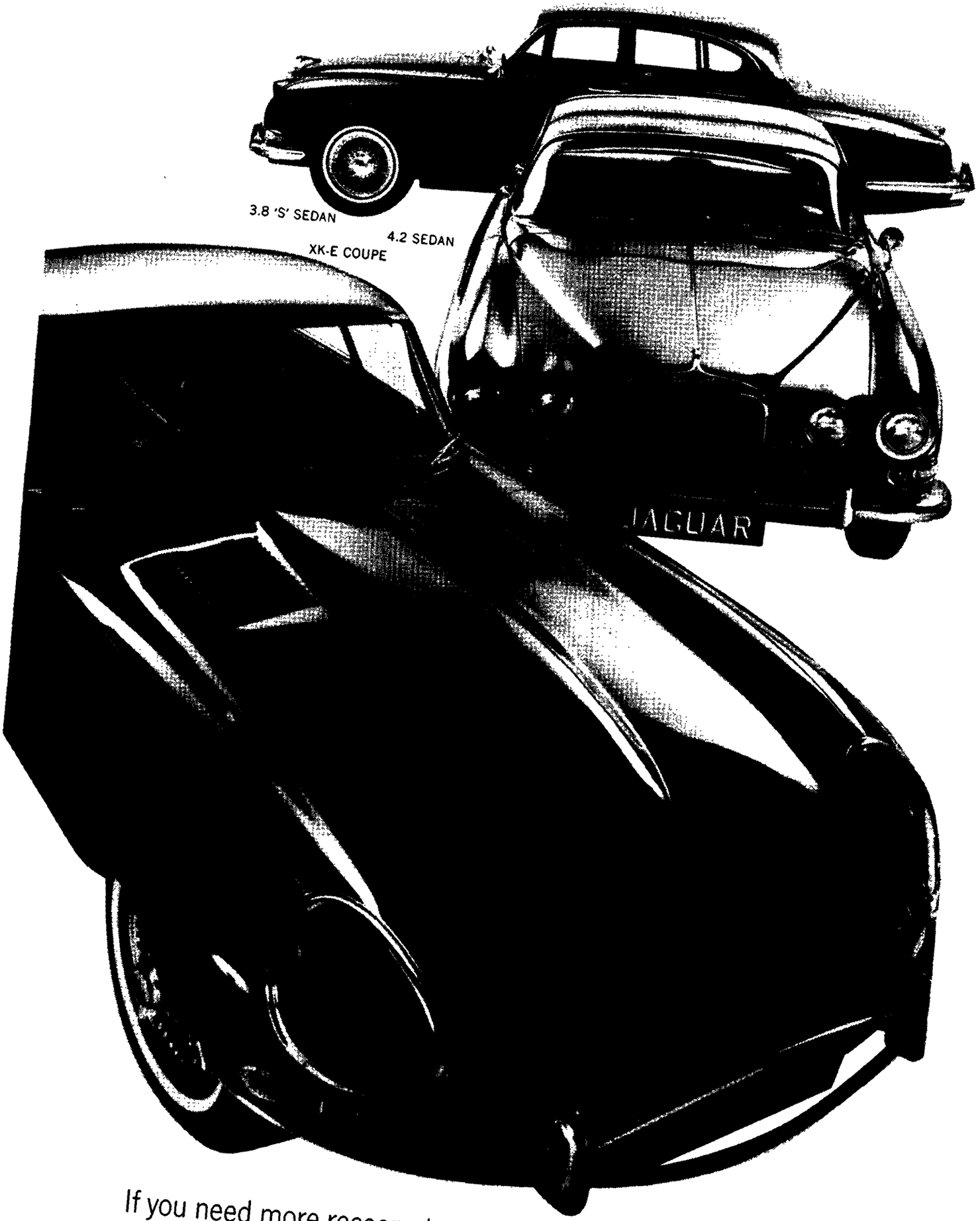

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The Political Economy of the Great Society

OSCAR GASS

OSCAR GASS, who has written frequently for COMMENTARY on politics and economics in the past decade, will be conducting this new department—devoted to the analysis of important domestic issues—on a regular basis during the coming year. Mr. Gass is a consulting economist in private practice in Washington, D.C.

All art is concerned with . . . contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and of which the origin is in the maker and not in the thing made. . . .
—Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140a

WHOEVER DIRECTS thought toward the political forces in the shaping of the economy of the United States, during the century since the abolition of slavery, cannot fail to light upon two critical years—1896 and 1932. I think that 1964 may be another such year.

1896. A politics intimately identified with urban business leadership is challenged, but triumphs. The victor, the Republican party, begins a thirty-six-year national ascendancy, only partially interrupted for eight years when Wilson is President. And this triumph of a political leadership linked with urban business is achieved initially in a country where more than three-fifths of all people still live on farms or in towns of less than 2,500. Yet the 1896 attempt to effect a coalition of farmers and workers—rural South and West to join urban North—fails utterly. Labor does not find a political voice. Radical agrarian Populism comes to nothing. The drive of debtors to legislate reflation, through a silver-based expansion of monetary supply, also comes to nothing. Instead, all three branches of the national government are taken firmly into hands profoundly considerate of the rights of property. Two conservative sectional parties are consolidated, one North and one South. The federal Supreme Court disciplines any vagrant state legislature. The mass of the American people withdraws from participation in politics, to a degree never before experienced in the history of the nation. The way is made straight for captains of industry and finance.*

1932. The politics identified with business leadership is discredited. The Republican party is discredited. The economy is disrupted: nearly one-fourth of all who wish to work can find no employment. And now the American majority has become convinced—vaguely and inarticulately but profoundly—that Main Street and Wall Street have falsely asserted their all-sufficiency. Private enterprise does not suffice. The market does not suffice. The economic machine needs control, by rules and discretion, by brakes and accelerator—in short, by government. And whoever governs must have canons (overt or covert) of the distribution of burdens and benefits. After what has happened, are Republicans again to be trusted to govern?

No. From 1932, Republicans came to be regarded normally, by the majority of Americans, as economic governors at best indifferently competent and steadily biased toward the rich. The Republican party was accordingly shorn of national political ascendancy for at least as long as the thirty-six years of its former dominance. (Again there was one partial interruption, again for eight years—this time for Eisenhower's Presidency.) After three decades, the stamp of 1932 remains. In November 1962, the country chose 435 Congressmen—259 Democrats and 176 Republicans. But in the thirty Congressional districts of lowest income, there were chosen twenty-nine Democrats and one Republican. And in the thirty Congressional districts of highest income, there were chosen twenty-five Republicans and five Democrats. The Republicans remained the preferred party of the prosperous, the Democrats the dominant party among the poor.

One might fall into the injustice of attributing no continuing consequence to Franklin Roosevelt, in economic policy, if one were to forget the long-remembering enemies he made. Socialization

*A judicious, low-keyed account of the issues and personalities of 1896 is *McKinley, Bryan and the People*, by Paul W. Glad, Lippincott, 1964. On the non-participationist polity which emerged after 1896, we have now the important paper, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," by Walter Dean Burnham, in the *American Political Science Review* of March 1965.

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was not at issue: only the most unbalanced of Roosevelt haters were much worried about New Deal "collectivism" either during the NRA phase of 1933-35 or in the subsequent years of peace, when Roosevelt improvised and drifted without any general economic policy. But, short of red revolution, there were things that hurt. When the President secured legislation regulating banks, securities' markets, and holding companies, the accredited captains of industry and finance accused him passionately (and correctly) of questioning their individual honesty and corporate intelligence. And these same dignitaries found even more embittering Roosevelt's concern to provide relief for the poor (lazy and improvident), to strengthen the bargaining position of labor (already too arrogant), and to Americanize such trumpery European novelties as Social Security. Moreover, it should be remembered and weighed that, among the classes, Roosevelt's most painful betrayal—and from a graduate of Groton and Harvard!—was his persistence in proposals to increase the taxes of the rich. And, to sharpen the pain, he justified these new exactions in language which men of means had hoped never to hear from a President of the United States. For example, in his message of June 19, 1935, Roosevelt argued that existing tax laws had "done little to prevent an unjust concentration of wealth and economic power" and that this tax structure worked to the "unfair advantage of the few." With such language, Roosevelt established a tradition in which the Democratic party was steadily regarded as an enemy by most men of property.*

1964. Lyndon Johnson broke decisively with the Roosevelt tradition of Democratic party estrangement from the established leaders of the American business community. Truman had not been of a mind to do such a thing. Stevenson had not the opportunity. Kennedy tried and failed.

I do not know any precise measure of Johnson's 1964 success in winning the support of business leadership. In part, the information is not available. (The records of "Businessmen for Johnson," for example, are not yet open for study.) In part, no objective information exists: the change was recorded only in the polling booth. In any case, the change is not complete. It would appear that the highest levels of businessmen voted for Johnson more than intermediate and lower ones. Some industries and states were little affected. Very few businessmen ceased to be Republicans, became Democrats, and voted for other Democratic candidates along with Johnson. (Johnson ran somewhat ahead of the Congressmen of his party, while Kennedy had run decidedly behind.) To vote once for Johnson against Goldwater is still quite some distance from holding the view that Democrats are generally as good for businessmen as Republicans —or even better.

Still, one may perhaps sharpen awareness of the distance which separates the present from the recent past by examining a text from 1960. In that year, Professor E. E. Schattschneider, one of the most perceptive students of American politics, published an important book entitled *The Semi-sovereign People* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston). There Schattschneider was concerned to argue, at one point, that an interest-group or pressure-group may be the captive of a single party because the other party is foreclosed from welcoming this interest-group. And he illustrated the party captor and the interest-group captive with the case of American business (pages 56-57):

> The Republican party enjoys a substantial latitude in its relations with business because its only competitor is the Democratic party and business has no party alternative. . . . In this kind of alignment the relation of business and the Republican party is not that of master and servant . . . because the party has what amounts to a political monopoly of the business interest.

Also in 1960, the quoted sentences were, I think, not the most telling evidence of Professor Schattschneider's acumen. But in 1965 even one of the duller of the professor's students would not write such things. Business is welcome in the Democratic party. Business deals with the Democratic party—though it has not stopped dealing also with the Republican party. What is new today is that many sophisticated businessmen believe that, in Washington, it is the Democratic party leadership which is the more skillful and useful. This belief may make 1964 as great a break with its political antecedents as were 1932 and 1896†.

II

THE NEW POLITICAL economy, with which Lyndon Johnson has now engaged the support of American business leadership, is perhaps best identified as one variety of the economics of *demand management*. Skilfully handled, and in a cooperation between politics and property, this political economy may bring a more swift and sustained rise in prosperity than has been common in the national experience of the past century. It may also thin the number of those Americans who are completely Strangers to the City. It is not the political economy of a society substantially more

*There are interesting glimpses of the economics and politics of 1932-36 in *Rexford Tugwell and the New Deal*, by Bernard Sternsher, Rutgers University Press, 1964. On the parties of rich and poor, and much else, see *Congressional Districts of the United States*, a publication of Congressional Quarterly Inc., August 1964. A fine-tempered history of New Deal taxation was written by the late Randolph E. Paul, in his *Taxation in the United States*, Little Brown & Co., 1954.

†The most illuminating study of the 1964 election that I have encountered is "Electoral Myth and Reality" by Converse, Clausen and Miller, in the *American Political Science Review* of June 1965. But that essay deals rather with the certainty of Goldwater the gravedigger than with the uncertainty of Johnson the innovator.

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equalitarian than the one which Americans have traditionally inhabited. But this limited equalitarian impulse does not now mean a foreseeable political disadvantage. I find no reason to believe that any substantial number of Americans presently desire a greatly more equalitarian society than that in which they live.

Decisive in this economics is the role of a national government which, each year (and when feasible more frequently) changes its taxes, alters the volume of its public spending, and adjusts the amount of its lending, in deliberate intention of making total demand "adequate." In the summer of 1965—*after* the 1962-65 cumulative reduction of perhaps $20 billion in annual revenues (income tax, excise, investment credit and liberalized depreciation)—the federal government now has an annual "accrual from growth" officially estimated at some $7 billion. This accrual must either be added cumulatively each year to public expenditure, or remitted, by again and again reducing tax rates, if the federal fiscal system is not to "drag" on the regular growth of the economy. The precise dollar estimate of the accrual is not as significant as the idea. (The correct figure may already be $10 billion.) What is important is that, in 1965, these ideas—of demand management, of regular "accrual" from growth, and of fiscal "drag"—are conventionally respectable in Washington. In 1962, they were still economists' idiosyncrasies. There is the change.

A careful student of this change might do best to follow it in the path of Congressman Wilbur D. Mills of Arkansas, Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means. In July 1962, Mills opposed a general tax reduction unless accompanied by a reduction in federal expenditure. In 1963, Mills reversed himself, and he was fully aware of what he was doing. In an important speech (September 25, 1963), he reported to the House that he initially felt more profound reservations about this "turning point in economic policy" than he had "experienced with respect to almost any other matter." But now he had held hearings, listened, questioned, studied, and been convinced. The new policy, he informed the House, involved what was "undoubtedly the most important legislation affecting the economic front here at home" that had come his way.

Businessmen long preferred an economics more their own—more of the kind where discretion comes with property, less of the kind where decisive acts of discretion come from political authority. American men of property have always been profoundly conscious of the great range of possible alternatives in income shares. They have been equally conscious of the bearing of these alternatives on the opportunities afforded individual lives. Government demand management might enlarge total national income; yes, but who would control, and to whom would the enlarged income go? Put not your faith in Presidents and Congresses! After all, a management—even a demand management—must always be *by* somebody and *for* somebody. Consequently, when American men of property had completed their conventional bows to the common interest in the expansion of the national product, they still long stood hesitant, undecided.

Here Europe came to the shaping of America. The European example began to be felt after 1953 and came to full American consciousness after 1958. In the average year of 1953-63, per capita real income rose about 4 per cent in Western Europe and only about 1.2 per cent in the United States. American businessmen observed this flowering of European capitalism, in countries where demand management was universally acknowledged. They invested in this European growth, and did well out of it. (By now, the book value of American direct investments in Europe is about $12.5 billion. In 1965, American earnings from these investments, plus royalties and fees, will be about $1.6 billion.) After 1958, the emergence in France of a Gaullist "planned economy," of the style of Napoleon III, gave proof that a slightly different variety of demand management need not hurt. (France even became the foremost European country for the location of new American business ventures.) The Eisenhower economic flop of 1958-60 was also too gross for sophisticated businessmen to disregard. "Ike is a wonderful fellow, but it is easier to make money with Erhard and de Gaulle."*

DEMAND management, in its American variety, is something quite distinct from policy action to achieve full employment. Unless we grasp this distinction, we shall not understand the society in which we live. American public men are quite united in concern to avoid a depression of 10 to 15 million unemployed. But they are almost equally united in sharing a leery attitude toward full employment. For two decades, the words "full employment" have indeed constituted a shibboleth toward which most public figures find it necessary to make an occasional bow. But almost nobody in authority regards full employment as a practical goal, to be pursued by calculated, burden-bearing action.

The genuine American position—with demand management or without—is that other objectives take priority over full employment. Foremost is the discipline of the labor force. Second is the restraint of sellers who have some monopoly power. Under full employment, wages are pushed up; prices are pushed up; the value of fixed incomes

*A useful comparative study of 1949-61, subjecting the six Common Market countries plus Norway, UK, and USA to analysis through common categories, is *Economic Policy in Our Time*, by E. S. Kirschen and eight others, 3 vols., Rand McNally & Co., 1964. The attractiveness of France for American business in 1958-65 is shown in a study by the Chase Manhattan Bank, *Report On Western Europe*, February-March 1965.

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declines; profits come easily; businessmen lose their sobriety; innovation is neglected; the international competitive position is weakened: there is the devil to pay! From the top, the management of an economy with 4½ per cent unemployment is a lazy swim in a mild sea. With unemployment of 2½ per cent, it becomes a hot shower. At 1½ per cent, it is transformed into a Turkish steam bath. Consequently, in the summer of 1965, men of authority in Washington take only a limited interest in the reduction of unemployment below the present 4½ per cent. They are more concerned with the danger of "overheating" the economy.

Only about two-fifths of the American unemployed are now receiving any insurance compensation. These get something over a third of their regular wages. President Johnson has indeed proposed that the national unemployment compensation system be greatly enlarged. He also observed (May 8, 1965): "No major improvements have been made since its original enactment 30 years ago." And Secretary of Labor Wirtz later referred to the unemployed as ". . . people, men and women, who live in closets of depression in the mansion of prosperity." But the proposed unemployment compensation bill (H.R. 8282) had its first hearing day only on August 9th.* In all the President's program, compensation of the unemployed was given the lowest priority. There is therefore irony, as well as truth, in the President's statement (on August 15th), after the riots in Los Angeles, that one should ponder not only the immediate damage done but also the heavy wrong of justice long delayed. We need each to take to himself—and the President more than most—the message of an old story: "And Nathan said to David" (2 Samuel, xii: 7) " 'Thou art the man.' "

DEMAND management, in the style of the Great Society, is also not an economics of "the public sector." On the contrary, its accent is on private demand. It reduces taxes, so that private spending will increase. By twice holding federal spending below $100 billion, in the administrative budget, President Johnson confirmed the expectation of conservative opinion that he could be trusted to keep the federal sector from acquiring greater weight. And even if we go beyond the administrative budget, and include what are already (fiscal 1965) nearly $30 billion of federal payments to the public from trust funds and other sources, it is still true that Johnson has reduced the *relative* weight of federal spending.

In 1963, the last calendar year of Kennedy's administration, the comprehensive total, "Federal Payments to the Public," came to $117.2 billion; this was almost exactly 20 per cent of Gross National Product. By now, in the fiscal year 1966, Gross National Product (inclusive of price increases) is running about $100 billion higher. But the "Federal Payments to the Public" called for in the President's program for this fiscal year are only $10.2 billion higher. The incremental participation of the federal sector in the expanding economy, under Johnson, is therefore planned to be only about 10 per cent, or one-half of the established 20 per cent participation inherited from Kennedy. Johnson's intended reduction in the weight of the federal sector is accordingly now, very roughly, $10 billion.

This $10 billion relative reduction is to be compared, I think not unfairly, with the total of $11 billion provided in the administrative budget for 1966 under a comprehensive caption which President Johnson (in his Message of January 25, 1965) conveniently named: "Health, labor, education, housing and community development, economic opportunity program, and aid to the needy." What a recitation of noble objects! For these, the President proposed to provide an increase of $3.6 billion over the preceding year. The increase is about 9 per cent of the year's rise in the Gross National Product. And this was the one weighty category of increase in the entire budget. Nevertheless, the dominant thrust of the President's fiscal policy lay elsewhere. It consisted in giving further fuel to an economy responsive to abundance of private spending.†

This private spending does not mean investing. Private fixed investment, both in producers' capital and in housing, bore a greater relative weight in the economy in 1955-56. In 1964, gross domestic fixed investment of $88 billion was 14 per cent of the Gross National Product. Japan and Norway regularly invest more than twice this share; Germany comes near to twice, and so probably does the USSR. If we then also deduct from *gross* investment the accounting allowances for the using up of capital, the remaining *net* domestic fixed investment is less than 6 per cent of Net National Product. We may add a little more than 1 per cent to include net investment abroad and a little less than 1 per cent to cover the growth of inventories. This 2 per cent enlargement changes little. At 8 per cent of Net National Product, the American economy is not concentrating its resources on investing.

In any case, the practice of concentrating economic policy attention on investment (whether as private capital or public works), once strengthened by Keynes's influence, is going out of fashion. In demand management, the accent has shifted—both for short-term stabilization and for long-term growth—to securing a regular and adequate rate

*There is valuable information in the Committee Print of the Ways and Means Committee, dated July 30, 1965, entitled *Employment Security Amendments of 1965*. This is supplemented by the *Statement* of Secretary Wirtz, dated August 9, 1965.

† The bare budgetary program is in *The Budget of the United States Government . . . 1966*, Washington, 1965. A more illuminating analysis and statement of intent is the *Economic Report of the President* and especially *The Annual Report of the Council Of Economic Advisers*, both transmitted to the Congress in January 1965.

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of increase in consumption. Investment then tends to be regarded as something which, in our society, will largely take care of itself, when consumption grows enough. (If, in the Net National Product account, investment is 8 per cent and government 22 per cent, personal expenditure on consumption is 70 per cent—all the rest. In 1965, personal consumption expenditure will be over $425 billion.) It is a measure of relative success, in the functioning of the American economy during 1946-65, that in no single calendar year has aggregate real consumption been lower than in the preceding year. On the other hand, it is a measure of the modesty of this success that consumption per capita rose during 1946-65 by only 1¾ per cent a year. At that rate, 40 years are required to double the standard of living. Our fathers and grandfathers did no better, but we demand more.*

While American aggregate consumption has risen each year, investment has declined below the level of the preceding year in seven years out of nineteen. Most Western governments—some with eyes open, more with eyes closed—have simply given up trying to stabilize private investment, and they have abandoned the idea of compensating for its fluctuations through public works. I reproduce something of their sentiment in the language of Mr. I. M. D. Little, a British economist of open eyes and alert mind:

> . . . trying to control the economy by controlling investment is like controlling a dog by its tail, when you are not even sure how much and how soon you can make the tail move. . . . Because investment fluctuates most, some may think that this is the nettle to grasp. This is false because there is little prospect of the authorities being able to smooth investment adequately by measures which act directly on it rather than on consumption.†

Currently, the Washington demand managers also have turned away from special measures to stimulate investment. They are, I think, too sophisticated to experiment a second time with the New Frontier nonsense of using an investment tax-credit as an instrument of short-run expansion. In 1965, they seem to be working, cautiously, in terms of an annual per capita growth of about 2.2 per cent (doubling in 32 years); this rate of growth was chosen in the belief that it would create no pressure to reduce unemployment. Perhaps these managers may be forced to be a little more daring next year by the desire to meet defense and other objectives simultaneously. Then they may adjust taxing and spending to a target of 3 per cent per capita growth (doubling in 23½ years) and they may fall into full employment! In either case, I think it not impossible that the present Washington demand managers (in the Executive and the Congress) will prove themselves more understanding and more skillful than any the United States has had since the industrialization of the country began, some 125 years ago.

I do not suggest that this capable demand management will be employing its talents, to any considerable degree, to redistribute income to the American poor. There is an infantile leftism—domestic and international—which persists in making a muddle of this question: it assumes that every demand management must have an equalitarian purpose. Internationally, I have heard this fatuous notion expressed, in almost identical words, in the hills of Judea and in the jungle of Sumatra. "Your rich will never be able to spend all that on themselves. To keep employed, you will have to work for us. You will have to supply the poor." But it is perfectly feasible, both domestically and internationally, to build a second house for the rich without building a first house for the poor. One needs only the corresponding politics.

THERE IS NO evidence of equalization of American incomes, through the operation of the market, during the past two decades. The forms of personal income that have increased most are those distinctive to the rich: capital gains, interest, and dividends. Before direct taxes, the richest fifth of our families get roughly 46 per cent of all personal income, and the poorest fifth get roughly 4.6 per cent.** Our tax system has become less progressive in these decades, and it has been further "reformed" to bear relatively less on the rich and more on the poor since Lyndon Johnson was elected President. On the basis of past years, I would surmise that personal income in 1965 is distributed, among rather more than 60,000,000 American families and unattached individuals, something like this:

Poorest 12,000,000 families	$2,000 average
Second 12,000,000 families	$4,700 average
Median 12,000,000 families	$7,000 average
Next-highest 12,000,000 families	$9,800 average
Richest 12,000,000 families	$20,000 average

As a citizen, I judge this American income distribution—one of the foundation stones of our society—to be against good conscience. But I participate in it. And I record that, so far as my eyes can reach, no politically significant group of Americans, young or old, finds this income pattern —not as a statistic, but as experienced in the day's encounters—in conflict with its operating conceptions of a democratic society. I observe no

*The best concise summation of the historical record for 1840-1961 is in the essay "Notes on the Pattern of U.S. Economic Growth," in the many-sided volume by Simon Kuznets, entitled *Economic Growth and Structure*, W. W. Norton & Co., 1965.

†See the brilliant chapter on "Fiscal Policy" in *The British Economy in the Nineteen-Fifties*, edited by G. D. N. Worswick and P. H. Ady, Oxford, 1962. Quotation from p. 274.

**Estimates of family income distribution were formerly published annually in the *Survey of Current Business* of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the last having appeared in the *Survey* for July 1964. This publication has now been discontinued, with an explanation that makes a disquieting impression.

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significant distinction, in this matter, between the Washington architects of the Great Society and other people. The United States is today, in my appraisal, a country profoundly at peace with its prevailing structure of income differences. The unfeigned, unforced, unexpressed common conviction of Americans is that satisfactory incomes for all will be achieved in the general economic progress of the country. Alas, if that progress should come to the poor at the same pace as during 1946-65! Then it would be well along in the 21st century before the average income of the poorest fifth of American families reached $80 a week.

III

In the summer of 1965, Lyndon Johnson heads the strongest American political coalition since the New Deal. (I call it, without disrespect, Johnson's *Grossblock*.) It has a near monopoly of the political Left—the trade unions, the Negroes, and the ethnic minorities. And it reaches deep into the political Right. This coalition is also stronger in August 1965 than it was in November 1964: it has enjoyed a year of sustained economic expansion; it has the experience of a productive Congress.

I find the present coalition more effectively placed than was the New Deal. It wields a more sophisticated economics. It has a better trained bureaucracy. Its large Democratic majority in both houses of Congress is relatively cohesive. It has nothing to fear from the Supreme Court. And, perhaps most important, it embodies a cooperation—not a conflict—between government power and economic power, between politics and property.

One does not require great historical insight to see in this Johnson *Grossblock* a conservative welfare coalition quite parallel to those which now govern in many Western societies. With differences of nuance, Germany and France today have similar systems. But Johnson's is a stronger coalition than these two, because his has the trade unions locked inside.

I believe it to be greatly unlikely that the demand managers, who act for this coalition, will now move deliberately toward full employment. Full employment is a condition which can be borne, in good health, only by societies that have other *effective* sources of restraint than the market. Swedish society can. British society cannot. Our demand managers judge that American society cannot.

This coalition could, however, I believe, be brought to enact a greatly improved system of compensation to the unemployed. Probably the standard to be anticipated is a ceiling of two-thirds of each state's average wage. This standard will not be reached tomorrow. But it is possible to foresee, down the way, a compromise American version of the high principle, *Work or Wages for all the Able*.

The hand of charity will not be closed. A society where gross income rises by $40 billion a year may even find the heart to give an annual increment of $1 billion to the most unfortunate of its poor. In the general structure of society and politics, this charity changes nothing.

Social insurance undoubtedly has a long further career. Together with job tenure and seniority rights, insurance makes up the greater part of such personal security as is attainable in this society, where more than three-quarters of all personal wealth belongs to the most prosperous fifth of our families.

The Johnson *Grossblock* will not be overturned by popular armies marching against Big Government. The motif of Big Government oppression leaves the American people completely cold. Neither will this coalition be upset by a populist upsurge against the concentrated economic power of Big Business. The American people couldn't care less.

Socialism is not an entrant in the American contest. And, in my judgment, socialism has no such merit as would justify its becoming an entrant. In other countries also, I hope, there will be futures only for such socialisms as put narrow limits to nationalization, free themselves from indiscriminate sponsorship of monopolistic public corporations, and reject an idolatrous approach to authoritative central planning.

The New Frontier of 1961-63 was a triviality. The coalition of the Great Society is something far more considerable. With some shift and change, this coalition may have a long life. And there is no reason to believe that it has exhausted its potential for constructive achievement.

The Great Society of Lyndon Johnson is not my model of a democratic society. But it is a model not devoid of a certain greatness and not necessarily incompatible with a kind of human dignity.

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OSIP MANDELSTAM

FROM "THE NOISE OF TIME"

Though his work is relatively unknown in the West, OSIP MANDELSTAM *(1891-1938) is regarded as one of the leading modern Russian poets. His first collection of verse, published in 1913, established Mandelstam as a member of the group of young modernist poets known as the Acmeists, who were reacting against the Symbolist tradition. From that time on, his influence and reputation grew steadily. A collected edition of his major work appeared in 1928. In 1934, as a result of an uncomplimentary epigram said to have incurred Stalin's personal disfavor, Mandelstam was arrested and sentenced to three years of exile; he returned to Moscow in 1937, only to be arrested again the following year, charged with counter-revolutionary activity, and sentenced to a prison camp somewhere near Vladivostok, where he died in 1938. Though he was first of all a poet, Mandelstam also wrote essays, memoirs and literary criticism. The following selections, part of a memoir of his youth, have been taken from* The Prose of Osip Mandelstam, *to be published by Princeton University Press this month, translated and with an introduction by* CLARENCE BROWN.

Riots and French Governesses

IT WAS ALWAYS known in advance when the students would riot in front of the Kazan Cathedral. Every family had its student informer. The result was that these riots were attended—at a respectful distance, to be sure—by a great mass of people: children with their nurses, mamas, and aunts who had been unable to keep their insurrectionaries at home, old civil servants, and simply people who happened to be walking idly about. On the day appointed for the riot the sidewalks of the Nevskij teemed with a dense throng of spectators all the way from Sadovaja to the Anichkov Bridge. This mob was afraid to approach the Kazan Cathedral. The police were hidden in courtyards—for example, in the courtyard of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Catherine. The Kazan Square was itself relatively empty; across it would pass small knots of students and actual working men, the latter being pointed at with fingers. Suddenly, from the direction of the Kazan Square, there would burst forth a protracted, crescendoing yell, something on the order of a steady "oo" or "ee," which became an ominous howling, growing nearer and nearer. At that moment the spectators scattered and the crowd was crushed back by the horses. "Cossacks! Cossacks!"—the cry spread like lightning, faster than the Cossacks themselves. The "riot" itself, strictly speaking, was cordoned off and led away to the Mikhajlovskij Manège, and the Nevskij emptied as if it had been swept with a broom.

My first conscious, sharp perceptions were of gloomy crowds of people in the streets. I was exactly three years old. It was 1894 and I had been brought from Pavlovsk to Petersburg for the purpose of seeing the funeral of Alexander III. Furnished rooms had been taken on the fourth floor of some house on the Nevskij, opposite Nikolaevskaja Street. On the evening of the day before the ceremonies, having crawled up on the windowsill and seen the crowd-darkened street, I asked "When will they start?" and was told "tomorrow." It profoundly impressed me that all these throngs of people were spending the entire night in the street. Even death first appeared to me in a totally unnatural, elegant, and festive guise. Once I was walking with Mother and my nurse on the street along the Mojka past the chocolate building of the Italian Embassy. Suddenly the doors there were wide open and everyone was freely admitted inside, and there issued forth a smell of resin, incense, and something sweet and pleasant. Black velvet was draped over the entrance and the walls, which glistened with silver and tropical plants. Very high on his bier lay the embalmed Italian ambassador. What had all that to do with me? I do not know, but these impressions were strong and clear and I cherish them to this day.

The ordinary life of the city was poor and monotonous. Every day at about five o'clock there was promenading on the Bol'shaja Morskaja from Gorokhovaja Street to the General Staff Arch. All the foppish and idle elements of the city then proceeded slowly back and forth along the sidewalks, bowing and exchanging smiles: the ring of spurs, the languages of England and France—a living exhibit from the English Store and the Jockey Club. Hither also the nursemaids and governesses, young-looking French women, brought the children, in order to sigh and compare it all to the Champs Elysées.

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So many French governesses were hired to look after me that their features have become blurred and resolved into one general patch of portraiture. It is my opinion that the little songs, models of penmanship, anthologies, and conjugations had ended by driving all these French and Swiss women themselves into an infantile state. At the center of their world view, distorted by anthologies, stood the figure of the great emperor Napoleon and the War of 1812; after that came Joan of Arc (one Swiss girl, however, turned out to be a Calvinist), and no matter how often I tried, curious as I was, to learn something from them about France, I learned nothing at all, save that it was beautiful. The French governesses placed great value upon the art of speaking fast and abundantly and the Swiss upon the learning of little songs, among which the chief favorite was the "Song of Malbrough." These poor girls were completely imbued with the cult of great men—Hugo, Lamartine, Napoleon, and Molière. On Sundays they had permission to go to mass. They were not allowed to have acquaintances.

Somewhere in the Ile de France: grape barrels, white roads, poplars—and a winegrower has set out with his daughters to go to their grandmother in Rouen. On his return he is to find everything *"scellé,"* the presses and vats under an official seal, the doors and cellars closed with sealing wax. The manager had tried to conceal from the excise tax collectors a few pails of new wine. They had caught him in the act. The family is ruined. Enormous fine. And, as a result, the stern laws of France make me the present of a governess.

But what had I to do with the Guards' festivals, the monotonous prettiness of the host of the infantry and its steeds, the stone-faced battalions flowing with hollow tread down the Millionnaja, gray with marble and granite?

All the elegant mirage of Petersburg was merely a dream, a brilliant covering thrown over the abyss, while round about there sprawled the chaos of Judaism—not a motherland, not a house, not a hearth, but precisely a chaos, the unknown womb world whence I had issued, which I feared, about which I made vague conjectures and fled, always fled.

The chaos of Judaism showed through all the chinks of the stone-clad Petersburg apartment: in the threat of ruin, in the cap hanging in the room of the guest from the provinces, in the spiky script of the unread books of Genesis, thrown into the dust one shelf lower than Goethe and Schiller, in the shreds of the black-and-yellow ritual.

The strong, ruddy, Russian year rolled through the calendar with decorated eggs, Christmas trees, steel skates from Finland—December—gaily bedecked Finnish cab-drivers, and the villa. But mixed up with all this there was a phantom—the new year in September—and the strange, cheerless holidays, grating upon the ear with their harsh names: Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

The Bookcase

As A LITTLE bit of musk fills an entire house, so the least influence of Judaism overflows all of one's life. O, what a strong smell that is! Could I possibly not have noticed that in real Jewish houses there was a different smell from that in Gentile houses? And it was not only the kitchen that smelled so, but the people, things, and clothing. To this day I remember how that sweetish Jewish smell swaddled me in the wooden house of my grandfather and grandmother on Kljuchevaja Street in German Riga. My father's study at home was itself unlike the granite paradise of my sedate strolls; it led one away into an alien world, and the mixture of its furnishings, the selection of the objects in it were strongly knitted together in my consciousness. First of all, there was the hand-made oak armchair bearing the image of a balalaika and a gauntlet and, on its arched back, the motto "Slow but Sure"—a tribute to the pseudo-Russian style of Alexander III. Then there was a Turkish divan completely overwhelmed with ledgers, whose pages of flimsy paper were covered over with the minuscule gothic hand of German commercial correspondence. At first I thought my father's occupation consisted of printing his flimsy letters by cranking the handle of the copying machine. To this day I conceive of the smell of the yoke of labor as the penetrating smell of tanned leather; and the webbed kidskins thrown about the floor, and the pudgy chamois skins with excrescences like living fingers—all this, plus the bourgeois writing table with its little marble calendar, swims in a tobacco haze and is seasoned with the smells of leather. And in the drab surroundings of this mercantile room there was a little glass-front bookcase behind a curtain of green taffeta. It is about that bookcase that I should like to speak now. The bookcase of early childhood is a man's companion for life. The arrangement of its shelves, the choice of books, the colors of the spines are for him the color, height, and arrangement of world literature itself. And as for books which were not included in that first bookcase—they were never to force their way into the universe of world literature. Every book in the first bookcase is, willy-nilly, a classic, and not one of them can ever be expelled.

There was nothing haphazard in the way that strange little library had been deposited, like a geological bed, over several decades. The paternal and maternal elements in it were not mixed, but existed separately, and a cross section of the strata showed the history of the spiritual efforts of the entire family, as well as the inoculation of it with alien blood.

I always remember the lower shelf as chaotic: the books were not standing upright side by side but lay like ruins: reddish five-volume works with ragged covers, a Russian history of the Jews written in the clumsy, shy language of a Russian-speaking

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Talmudist. This was the Judaic chaos thrown into the dust. This was the level to which my Hebrew primer, which I never mastered, quickly fell. In a fit of national contrition they planned to hire a real Jewish teacher for me. He came from his Torgovaja Street and taught without taking off his cap, which made me feel awkward. His correct Russian sounded false. The Hebrew primer was illustrated with pictures which showed one and the same little boy, wearing a visored cap and with a melancholy adult face, in all sorts of situations—with a cat, a book, a pail, a watering can. I saw nothing of myself in that boy and with all my being revolted against the book and the subject. There was one striking thing in that teacher, although it sounded unnatural: the feeling of national Jewish pride. He talked about Jews as the French governess talked about Hugo and Napoleon. But I knew that he hid his pride when he went out into the street, and therefore did not believe him.

Above these Jewish ruins there began the orderly arrangement of books; those were the Germans—Schiller, Goethe, Kerner, and Shakespeare in German—in the old Leipzig and Tübingen editions, chubby little butterballs in stamped claret-colored bindings with a fine print calculated for the sharp vision of youth and with soft engravings done in a rather classical style: women with their hair down wring their hands, the lamp is always shown as an oil lamp, the horsemen have high foreheads, and the vignettes are clusters of grapes. All this was my father fighting his way as an autodidact into the German world out of the Talmudic wilds.

Still higher were my mother's Russian books—Pushkin in Isakov's 1876 edition. I still think that was a splendid edition and like it more than the one published by the Academy. It contained nothing superfluous, the type was elegantly arranged, the columns of poetry flowed freely as soldiers in flying battalions, and leading them like generals were the clear reasonable years of composition, right up to 1837. The color of Pushkin? Every color is accidental—what color could one choose for the buzz of speech? O, that idiotic alphabet of colors by Rimbaud . . . !

My Isakov Pushkin was in a cassock of no color at all, in a binding of schoolboy calico, in a brownish-black, faded cassock with a tinge of earth and sand; he feared neither spots, nor ink, nor fire, nor kerosene. For a quarter of a century the black and sand cassock had lovingly absorbed everything into itself—so vividly do I sense the everyday spiritual beauty, the almost physical charm of my mother's Pushkin. It bore an inscription in reddish ink: "For her diligence as a pupil of the Third Form." The Isakov Pushkin is bound up with stories about ideal schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, ruddy with consumption and shod in ragged boots: the 1880's in Vilno. The word "intellectual" was pronounced by my mother and especially by my grandmother, with pride. Lermontov had a greenish-blue binding with something military about it: not for nothing was he a hussar. He never seemed to me to be the brother or relative of Pushkin. Goethe and Schiller I regarded as twins, but in Pushkin and Lermontov I recognized two men alien to each other and consciously kept them apart. After 1837, blood and poetry both rang differently in the ears.

And how about Turgenev and Dostoevsky? Those were supplements to *The Field*. In external aspect they were identical, like brothers. They were bound in boards covered with a thin leather. Prohibition lay upon Dostoevsky like a gravestone: it was said that he was "heavy." Turgenev was altogether sanctioned and open, with his Baden-Baden, *Spring Torrents,* and languid conversations. But I knew that the tranquil life in Turgenev had already vanished and was nowhere to be found.

WOULD YOU like to know the key to the epoch, the book which had positively become white-hot from handling, the book that would not under any circumstances agree to die, that lay like someone alive in the narrow coffin of the 1890's, the book whose leaves, perhaps from reading or from having been left in the sun on a bench at someone's *dacha,* had yellowed prematurely, whose first page bore the features of a youth with an inspired coiffure, features that became an icon? Gazing into the face of the young Nadson,* I am astonished by the genuine fieriness of those features and at the same time by their total inexpressiveness, their almost wooden simplicity. Does this not describe the whole book? Does it not describe the era? Send him off to Nice, show him the Mediterranean: he will go on singing his ideal and his suffering generation—with the possible addition of a seagull and the crest of a wave. Do not laugh at Nadsonism: it is the enigma of Russian culture and the essentially uncomprehended sound of it, for we do not understand and hear as they understood and heard. Who is he, this wooden monk with the inexpressive features of an eternal youth, this inspired idol of students—especially of students, that is to say, the elite of certain decades —this prophet of school recitals? How many times, knowing already that Nadson was bad, have I still reread his book and, putting away the poetic haughtiness of the present and pity for the ignorance of this youth in the past, tried to hear it as it sounded to his generation. How greatly was I aided in this by the diaries and letters of Nadson: the continual literary drudgery, the candles, applause, the burning faces; the tight ring of his generation and, in the center, the altar—the lec-

* Semën Jakovlevich Nadson (1862-1887) died of consumption at twenty-five. His premature death and his ardent verse—personal, pessimistic, imbued with passionate idealism—combined to make him a hero to the young radical intelligentsia of this period.—ED.

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turer's table and its glass of water. Like summer insects above the hot globe of a lamp, an entire generation was carbonized and scorched by the flame of literary celebrations with garlands of allegorical roses, enormous assemblies which bore the character of a cult and expiatory offering for the generation. Hither came those who wished to share the fate of their generation right up to the point of ruin—the haughty ones remained to one side with Tjutchev* and Fet.* Actually, all that was serious in Russian literature turned away from this consumptive generation with its ideal and its Baal. What was left to it? Paper roses, the candles of the school recitals, and the barcarole of Rubinstein. The 1880's in Vilno as mother recalled them. It was everywhere the same: sixteen-year-old girls tried to read John Stuart Mill and at public recitals one could see luminous personalities who—with a certain dense admixture of pedal, a fainting away on the *piano* part, and blank features—played the latest things of the leonine Anton. But what actually happened was that the intelligentsia with Buckle and Rubinstein and led by the pure souls—who in their beatific idiocy had completely lost the way—resolutely turned to the practice of self-burning. Like high tar-coated torches the adherents of the People's Will Party burned for all the people to see, with Sofija Perovskaja† and Zheljabov,† and all of them, all of provincial Russia and all of the students, smouldered in sympathy: not one single green leaf was to be left.

What a meager life, what poor letters, what un-funny jokes and parodies! I used to have pointed out to me in the family album a daguerreotype of my uncle Misha, a melancholiac with swollen and unhealthy features, and it was explained that he had not merely gone out of his mind—he had "burnt up," as that generation put it. They said the same of Garshin,** and many were the deaths reduced to that single ritual.

Semën Afanas'ich Vengerov, a relative of mine on my mother's side (the family in Vilno and school memories), understood nothing in Russian literature and studied Pushkin as a professional task, but "one thing" he understood. His "one thing" was: the heroic character of Russian literature. How fine he was with his heroic character when he would drag slowly along Zagorodnyj Prospekt from his apartment to the card catalogue, hanging on the elbow of his aging wife and smirking into his dense ant beard.

The Judaic Chaos

THERE ONCE arrived at our house a person completely unknown to us, an unmarried lady of about forty, in a little red hat and with a sharp chin and angry dark eyes. On the strength of her having come from the small town of Shavli, she demanded that we find her a husband in Petersburg. She spent a week in the house before we managed to send her packing. From time to time wandering authors would turn up—bearded and long-skirted people, Talmudic philosophers, peddlers of their own printed aphorisms and dicta. They would leave us autographed copies and complain of being tormented by their evil wives. Once or twice in my life I was taken to a synagogue as if to a concert. There was a long wait to get in—one practically had to buy tickets from scalpers—and all that I saw and heard there caused me to return home in a heavy stupor. There is a Jewish quarter in Petersburg: it begins just behind the Mariinskij Theater, where the ticket-scalpers freeze, beyond the prison angel of the Litovskij Palace, which was burned down in the Revolution. There on Torgovaja Street one sees Jewish shop-signs with pictures of a bull and a cow, women with an abundance of false hair showing under their kerchiefs, and, mincing along in overcoats reaching down to the ground, old men full of experience and philoprogeneity. The synagogue with its conical caps and onion domes loses itself like some elegant exotic fig tree amongst the shabby buildings. Velveteen berets with pom-poms, attendants and choristers on the point of physical exhaustion, clusters of seven-branched candelabra, tall velvet headdresses. The Jewish ship, with its sonorous alto choirs and the astonishing voices of its children, lays on all sail, split as it is by some ancient storm into male and female halves. Having blundered into the women's balcony, I edged along stealthily as a thief, hiding behind rafters. The Cantor, like Samson, collapsed the leonine building, he was answered by the velvet headdress, and the awesome equilibrium of vowels and consonants in the impeccably enunciated words imparted to the chants an invincible power. But how offensive was the crude speech of the rabbi—though it was not ungrammatical; how vulgar when he uttered the words "His Imperial Highness," how utterly vulgar all that he said! And all of a sudden two top-hatted gentlemen, splendidly dressed and glossy with wealth, with the refined movements of men of the world, touch the heavy book, step out of the circle, and on behalf of everyone, with the authorization and commission of everyone, perform some honorary ritual, the principal thing in the ceremony. Who is that? Baron Ginsburg. And that? Varshavskij.

In my childhood I absolutely never heard Yiddish; only later did I hear an abundance of that melodious, always surprised and disappointed, interrogative language with its sharp accents on the weakly stressed syllables. The speech of the father and the speech of the mother—does not our

* Fedor Tjutchev and Afanasi Afanasievich Fet were 19th century Russian poets.

† Perovskaja and Zheljabov were leaders of the revolutionary People's Will party. They were executed in 1881.

** Vsevolod Mikhailovich Garshin was a short-story writer in the tradition of Gogol.—ED.

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language feed throughout all its long life on the confluence of these two, do they not compose its character? The speech of my mother was clear and sonorous without the least foreign admixture, with rather wide and too open vowels—the literary Great Russian language. Her vocabulary was poor and restricted, the locutions were trite, but it was a language, it had roots and confidence. Mother loved to speak and took joy in the roots and sounds of her Great Russian speech, impoverished by intellectual clichés. Was she not the first of her whole family to achieve pure and clear Russian sounds? My father had absolutely no language; his speech was tongue-tie and languagelessness. The Russian speech of a Polish Jew? No. The speech of a German Jew? No again. Perhaps a special Courland accent? I never heard such. A completely abstract, counterfeit language, the ornate and twisted speech of an autodidact, where normal words are intertwined with the ancient philosophical terms of Herder, Leibniz, and Spinoza, the capricious syntax of a Talmudist, the artificial, not always finished sentence: it was anything in the world, but not a language, neither Russian nor German.

In essence, my father transferred me to a totally alien century and distant atmosphere. These were, if you will, the purest 18th or even 17th century of an enlightened ghetto somewhere in Hamburg. Religious interests had been eliminated completely. The philosophy of the Enlightenment was transformed into intricate Talmudist pantheism. Somewhere in the vicinity Spinoza is breeding his spiders in a jar. One has a presentiment of Rousseau and his natural man. Everything fantastically abstract, intricate, and schematic. A fourteen-year-old boy, whom they had been training as a rabbi and had forbidden to read worldly books, runs off to Berlin and ends up in a higher Talmudic school, where there had gathered a number of such stubborn, rational youths, who had aspired in God-forsaken backwaters to be geniuses. Instead of the Talmud, he reads Schiller—and mark you, he reads it as a new book. Having held out here for a while, he falls out of this strange university back into the seething world of the 70's in order to remember the conspiratorial milk shop on Karavannaja whence a bomb was tossed under Alexander, and in a glove-making shop and in a leather factory he expounds to the paunchy and astonished customers the philosophical ideals of the 18th century.

When I was taken to Riga, to my Riga grandparents, I resisted and nearly cried. It seemed to me that I was being taken to the native country of my father's incomprehensible philosophy. The artillery of band-boxes, baskets with padlocks, and all the chubby, awkward family baggage started upon its journey. The winter things were salted with coarse grains of naphthalene. The armchairs stood about like white horses in their stable blankets of slip covers. The preparations for the trip to the Riga coast seemed to me no fun. I used to collect nails at that time—the absurdest of collecting whimsies. I would run my hands through piles of nails like the Covetous Knight and rejoice at the growth of my spiky wealth. Then they would take my nails away.

The trip was alarming. At night in Dorpat some sort of *Vereins* returning from a large songfest would storm the dimly lit carriage with their loud Estonian songs. The Estonians would stamp their feet and throw themselves through the door. It was very frightening.

My grandfather, a blue-eyed old man in a skull cap which covered half his forehead and with the serious and rather dignified features to be seen in very respected Jews, would smile, rejoice, and try to be affectionate—but did not know how. Then his dense eyebrows would draw together. When he wanted to take me in his arms I almost burst into tears. My kindly grandmother, wearing a black wig over her gray hair and a cap with little yellow flowers, walked with tiny little steps over the creaking floorboards and was forever wanting people to eat something.

She kept asking, *"Pokushali? Pokushali?"* (Have you eaten?)—the only Russian word that she knew. But I did not like the old people's spicy dainties, with their bitter almond taste. My parents left to go to the city. My somber grandfather and sad, bustling grandmother made an effort to distract me with conversation and ruffled their feathers like offended old birds. I tried to explain to them that I wanted to go to mama—they didn't understand. Then I represented my desire to leave by putting my index and middle fingers through the motions of walking.

Suddenly my grandfather drew from a drawer of a chest a black and yellow silk cloth, put it around my shoulders, and made me repeat after him words composed of unknown sounds; but, dissatisfied with my babble, he grew angry and shook his head in disapproval. I felt stifled and afraid. How my mother arrived just in time to save me I don't remember.

My father often spoke of my grandfather's honesty as of some lofty spiritual quality. For a Jew, honesty is wisdom and almost holiness. The farther one went back among the generations of these stern, blue-eyed old men, the more honesty and sternness one found. Great-grandfather Beniamin once said, "I am closing down the business—I need no more money." He must have had just exactly enough to last him till the day of his death, since he did not leave a kopeck behind. . . .

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SUSAN SONTAG

THE IMAGINATION OF DISASTER*

OURS IS INDEED an age of extremity. For we live under continual threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed, destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror. It is fantasy, served out in large rations by the popular arts, which allows most people to cope with these twin specters. For one job that fantasy can do is to lift us out of the unbearably humdrum and to distract us from terrors, real or anticipated—by an escape into exotic dangerous situations which have last-minute happy endings. But another one of the things that fantasy can do is to normalize what is psychologically unbearable, thereby inuring us to it. In the one case, fantasy beautifies the world. In the other, it neutralizes it.

The fantasy to be discovered in science fiction films does both jobs. These films reflect world-wide anxieties, and they serve to allay them. They inculcate a strange apathy concerning the processes of radiation, contamination, and destruction that I for one find haunting and depressing. The naïve level of the films neatly tempers the sense of otherness, of alien-ness, with the grossly familiar. In particular, the dialogue of most science fiction films, which is generally of a monumental but often touching banality, makes them wonderfully, unintentionally funny. Lines like: "Come quickly, there's a monster in my bathtub"; "We must do something about this"; "Wait, Professor. There's someone on the telephone"; "But that's incredible"; and the old American stand-by (accompanied by brow-wiping), "I hope it works!"—are hilarious in the context of picturesque and deafening holocaust. Yet the films also contain something which is painful and in deadly earnest.

Science fiction films are one of the most accomplished of the popular art forms, and can give a great deal of pleasure to sophisticated film addicts. Part of the pleasure, indeed, comes from the sense in which these movies are in complicity with the abhorrent. It is no more, perhaps, than the way all art draws its audience into a circle of complicity with the thing represented. But in science fiction films we have to do with things which are (quite literally) unthinkable. Here, "thinking about the unthinkable"—not in the way of Herman Kahn, as a subject for calculation, but as a subject for fantasy—becomes, however inadvertently, itself a somewhat questionable act from a moral point of view. The films perpetuate clichés about identity, volition, power, knowledge, happiness, social consensus, guilt, responsibility which are, to say the least, not serviceable in our present extremity. But collective nightmares cannot be banished by demonstrating that they are, intellectually and morally, fallacious. This nightmare—the one reflected in various registers in the science fiction films—is too close to our reality.

A typical science fiction film has a form as predictable as a Western, and is made up of elements which are as classic as the saloon brawl, the blonde schoolteacher from the East, and the gun duel on the deserted main street.

One model scenario proceeds through five phases:

(1) The arrival of the thing. (Emergence of the monsters, landing of the alien space-ship, etc.) This is usually witnessed, or suspected, by just one person, who is a young scientist on a field trip. Nobody, neither his neighbors nor his colleagues, will believe him for some time. The hero is not married, but has a sympathetic though also incredulous girlfriend.

(2) Confirmation of the hero's report by a host of witnesses to a great act of destruction. (If the invaders are beings from another planet, a fruitless attempt to parley with them and get them to leave peacefully.) The local police are summoned to deal with the situation and massacred.

(3) In the capital of the country, conferences between scientists and the military take place, with the hero lecturing before a chart, map, or blackboard. A national emergency is declared. Reports of further atrocities. Authorities from other countries arrive in black limousines. All international tensions are suspended in view of the planetary emergency. This stage often includes a rapid montage of news broadcasts in various languages, a meeting at the UN, and more conferences between the military and the scientists. Plans are made for destroying the enemy.

SUSAN SONTAG, the young critic and novelist, is the author of *The Benefactor* and contributes frequently to a wide variety of magazines. The present piece, in somewhat different form, will be included in a collection of her essays, *Against Interpretation*, to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

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(4) Further atrocities. At some point the hero's girlfriend is in grave danger. Massive counter-attacks by international forces, with brilliant displays of rocketry, rays, and other advanced weapons, are all unsuccessful. Enormous military casualties, usually by incineration. Cities are destroyed and/or evacuated. There is an obligatory scene here of panicked crowds stampeding along a highway or a big bridge, being waved on by numerous policemen who, if the film is Japanese, are immaculately white-gloved, preternaturally calm, and call out in dubbed English, "Keep moving. There is no need to be alarmed."

(5) More conferences, whose motif is: "They must be vulnerable to something." Throughout, the hero has been experimenting in his lab on this. The final strategy, upon which all hopes depend, is drawn up; the ultimate weapon—often a super-powerful, as yet untested, nuclear device —is mounted. Countdown. Final repulse of the monster or invaders. Mutual congratulations, while the hero and girlfriend embrace cheek to cheek and scan the skies sturdily. "But have we seen the last of them?"

THE FILM I have just described should be in technicolor and on a wide screen. Another typical scenario is simpler and suited to black-and-white films with a lower budget. It has four phases:

(1) The hero (usually, but not always, a scientist) and his girlfriend, or his wife and children, are disporting themselves in some innocent ultra-normal middle-class house in a small town, or on vacation (camping, boating). Suddenly, someone starts behaving strangely or some innocent form of vegetation becomes monstrously enlarged and ambulatory. If a character is pictured driving an automobile, something gruesome looms up in the middle of the road. If it is night, strange lights hurtle across the sky.

(2) After following the thing's tracks, or determining that It is radioactive, or poking around a huge crater—in short, conducting some sort of crude investigation—the hero tries to warn the local authorities, without effect; nobody believes anything is amiss. The hero knows better. If the thing is tangible, the house is elaborately barricaded. If the invading alien is an invisible parasite, a doctor or friend is called in, who is himself rather quickly killed or "taken possession of" by the thing.

(3) The advice of anyone else who is consulted proves useless. Meanwhile, It continues to claim other victims in the town, which remains implausibly isolated from the rest of the world. General helplessness.

(4) One of two possibilities. Either the hero prepares to do battle alone, accidentally discovers the thing's one vulnerable point, and destroys it. Or, he somehow manages to get out of town and succeeds in laying his case before competent authorities. They, along the lines of the first script but abridged, deploy a complex technology which (after initial setbacks) finally prevails against the invaders.

Another version of the second script opens with the scientist-hero in his laboratory, which is located in the basement or on the grounds of his tasteful, prosperous house. Through his experiments, he unwittingly causes a frightful metamorphosis in some class of plants or animals, which turn carnivorous and go on a rampage. Or else, his experiments have caused him to be injured (sometimes irrevocably) or "invaded" himself. Perhaps he has been experimenting with radiation, or has built a machine to communicate with beings from other planets or to transport him to other places or times.

Another version of the first script involves the discovery of some fundamental alteration in the conditions of existence of our planet, brought about by nuclear testing, which will lead to the extinction in a few months of all human life. For example: the temperature of the earth is becoming too high or too low to support life, or the earth is cracking in two, or it is gradually being blanketed by lethal fallout.

A third script, somewhat but not altogether different from the first two, concerns a journey through space—to the moon, or some other planet. What the space-voyagers commonly discover is that the alien terrain is in a state of dire emergency, itself threatened by extra-planetary invaders or nearing extinction through the practice of nuclear warfare. The terminal dramas of the first and second scripts are played out there, to which is added a final problem of getting away from the doomed and/or hostile planet and back to Earth.

I am aware, of course, that there are thousands of science fiction novels (their heyday was the late 1940's), not to mention the transcriptions of science fiction themes which, more and more, provide the principal subject matter of comic books. But I propose to discuss science fiction films (the present period began in 1950 and continues, considerably abated, to this day) as an independent sub-genre, without reference to the novels from which, in many cases, they were adapted. For while novel and film may share the same plot, the fundamental difference between the resources of the novel and the film makes them quite dissimilar. Anyway, the best science fiction movies are on a far higher level, as examples of the art of the film, than the science fiction books are, as examples of the art of the novel or romance. That the films might be better than the books is an old story. Good novels rarely make good films, but excellent films are often made from poor or trivial novels.

Certainly, compared with the science fiction novels, their film counterparts have unique strengths, one of which is the immediate representation of the extraordinary: physical deformity

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and mutation, missile and rocket combat, toppling skyscrapers. The movies are, naturally, weak just where the science fiction novels (some of them), are strong—on science. But in place of an intellectual workout, they can supply something the novels can never provide—sensuous elaboration. In the films it is by means of images and sounds, not words that have to be translated by the imagination, that one can participate in the fantasy of living through one's own death and more, the death of cities, the destruction of humanity itself.

Science fiction films are not about science. They are about disaster, which is one of the oldest subjects of art. In science fiction films, disaster is rarely viewed intensively; it is always extensive. It is a matter of quantity and ingenuity. If you will, it is a question of scale. But the scale, particularly in the wide-screen Technicolor films (of which the ones by the Japanese director, Inoshiro Honda, and the American director, George Pal, are technically the most brilliant and convincing, and visually the most exciting), does raise the matter to another level.

Thus, the science fiction film (like a very different contemporary genre, the Happening) is concerned with the aesthetics of destruction, with the peculiar beauties to be found in wreaking havoc, making a mess. And it is in the imagery of destruction that the core of a good science fiction film lies. This is the disadvantage of the cheap film—in which the monster appears or the rocket lands in a small dull-looking town. (Hollywood budget needs usually dictate that the town be in the Arizona or California desert. In *The Thing from Another World* [1951], the rather sleazy and confined set is supposed to be an encampment near the North Pole.) Still, good black-and-white science fiction films have been made. But a bigger budget, which usually means Technicolor, allows a much greater play back and forth among several model environments. There is the populous city. There is the lavish but ascetic interior of the space ship—either the invaders' or ours—replete with streamlined chromium fixtures and dials, and machines whose complexity is indicated by the number of colored lights they flash and strange noises they emit. There is the laboratory crowded with formidable machines and scientific apparatus. There is a comparatively old-fashioned looking conference room, where the scientist brings charts to explain the desperate state of things to the military. And each of these standard locales or backgrounds is subject to two modalities—intact and destroyed. We may, if we are lucky, be treated to a panorama of melting tanks, flying bodies, crashing walls, awesome craters and fissures in the earth, plummeting spacecraft, colorful deadly rays; and to a symphony of screams, weird electronic signals, the noisiest military hardware going, and the leaden tones of the laconic denizens of alien planets and their subjugated earthlings.

Certain of the primitive gratifications of science fiction films—for instance, the depiction of urban disaster on a colossally magnified scale—are shared with other types of films. Visually there is little difference between mass havoc as represented in the old horror and monster films and what we find in science fiction films, except (again) scale. In the old monster films, the monster always headed for the great city where he had to do a fair bit of rampaging, hurling buses off bridges, crumpling trains in his bare hands, toppling buildings, and so forth. The archetype is King Kong, in Schoedsach's great film of 1933, running amok, first in the African village (trampling babies, a bit of footage excised from most prints), then in New York. This is really not any different from Inoshiro Honda's *Rodan* (1957), where two giant reptiles—with a wingspan of five-hundred feet and supersonic speeds—by flapping their wings whip up a cyclone that blows most of Tokyo to smithereens. Or, the tremendous scenes of rampage by the gigantic robot who destroys half of Japan with the great incinerating ray which shoots forth from his eyes, at the beginning of Honda's *The Mysterians* (1959). Or, the destruction, by the rays from a fleet of flying saucers of New York, Paris and Tokyo, in *Battle in Outer Space* (1960). Or, the inundation of New York in *When Worlds Collide* (1951). Or, the end of London in 1968 depicted in George Pal's *The Time Machine* (1960). Neither do these sequences differ in aesthetic intention from the destruction scenes in the big sword, sandal, and orgy color spectaculars set in Biblical and Roman times—the end of Sodom in Aldrich's *Sodom and Gomorrah,* of Gaza in de Mille's *Samson and Delilah,* of Rhodes in *The Colossus of Rhodes,* and of Rome in a dozen Nero movies. D. W. Griffith began it with the Babylon sequence in *Intolerance,* and to this day there is nothing like the thrill of watching all those expensive sets come tumbling down.

In other respects as well, the science fiction films of the 1950's take up familiar themes. The famous movie serials and comics of the 1930's of the adventures of Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers, as well as the more recent spate of comic book super-heroes with extraterrestrial origins (the most famous is Superman, a foundling from the planet, Krypton, currently described as having been exploded by a nuclear blast) share motifs with more recent science fiction movies. But there is an important difference. The old science fiction films, and most of the comics, still have an essentially innocent relation to disaster. Mainly they offer new versions of the oldest romance of all—of the strong invulnerable hero with the mysterious lineage come to do battle on behalf of good and against evil. Recent science fiction films have a decided grimness, bolstered by their much greater degree of visual credibility, which contrasts strongly with the older films. Modern historical

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reality has greatly enlarged the imagination of disaster, and the protagonists—perhaps by the very nature of what is visited upon them—no longer seem wholly innocent.

THE LURE OF such generalized disaster as a fantasy is that it releases one from normal obligations. The trump card of the end-of-the-world movies—like *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1962)—is that great scene with New York or London or Tokyo discovered empty, its entire population annihilated. Or, as in *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (1959), the whole movie can be devoted to the fantasy of occupying the deserted city and starting all over again—Robinson Crusoe on a world-wide scale.

Another kind of satisfaction these films supply is extreme moral simplification—that is to say, a morally acceptable fantasy where one can give outlet to cruel or at least amoral feelings. In this respect, science fiction films partly overlap with horror films. This is the undeniable pleasure we derive from looking at freaks, at beings excluded from the category of the human. The sense of superiority over the freak conjoined in varying proportions with the titillation of fear and aversion makes it possible for moral scruples to be lifted, for cruelty to be enjoyed. The same thing happens in science fiction films. In the figure of the monster from outer space, the freakish, the ugly, and the predatory all converge—and provide a fantasy target for righteous bellicosity to discharge itself, and for the aesthetic enjoyment of suffering and disaster. Science fiction films are one of the purest forms of spectacle; that is, we are rarely inside anyone's feelings. (An exception to this is Jack Arnold's *The Incredible Shrinking Man* [1957].) We are merely spectators; we watch.

But in science fiction films, unlike horror films, there is not much horror. Suspense, shocks, surprises are mostly abjured in favor of a steady inexorable plot. Science fiction films invite a dispassionate, aesthetic view of destruction and violence—a *technological* view. Things, objects, machinery play a major role in these films. A greater range of ethical values is embodied in the décor of these films than in the people. Things, rather than the helpless humans, are the locus of values because we experience them, rather than people, as the sources of power. According to science fiction films, man is naked without his artifacts. *They* stand for different values, they are potent, they are what gets destroyed, and they are the indispensable tools for the repulse of the alien invaders or the repair of the damaged environment.

The science fiction films are strongly moralistic. The standard message is the one about the proper, or humane, uses of science, versus the mad, obsessional use of science. This message the science fiction films share in common with the classic horror films of the 1930's, like *Frankenstein, The Mummy, The Island of Doctor Moreau, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* (Georges Franju's brilliant *Les Yeux Sans Visage* [1959], called here *The Horror Chamber of Doctor Faustus,* is a more recent example.) In the horror films, we have the mad or obsessed or misguided scientist who pursues his experiments against good advice to the contrary, creates a monster or monsters, and is himself destroyed—often recognizing his folly himself, and dying in the successful effort to destroy his own creation. One science fiction equivalent of this is the scientist, usually a member of a team, who defects to the planetary invaders because "their" science is more advanced than "ours."

This is the case in *The Mysterians,* and, true to form, the renegade sees his error in the end, and from within the Mysterian space ship destroys it and himself. In *This Island Earth* (1955), the inhabitants of the beleaguered planet Metaluna propose to conquer Earth, but their project is foiled by a Metalunan scientist named Exeter who, having lived on Earth a while and learned to love Mozart, cannot abide such viciousness. Exeter plunges his space ship into the ocean after returning a glamorous pair (male and female) of American physicists to Earth. Metaluna dies. In *The Fly* (1958), the hero, engrossed in his basement-laboratory experiments on a matter-transmitting machine, uses himself as a subject, accidentally exchanges head and one arm with a housefly which had gotten into the machine, becomes a monster, and with his last shred of human will destroys his laboratory and orders his wife to kill him. His discovery, for the good of mankind, is lost.

Being a clearly labeled species of intellectual, the scientists in science fiction films are always liable to crack up or go off the deep end. In *Conquest of Space* (1955), the scientist-commander of an international expedition to Mars suddenly acquires scruples about the blasphemy involved in the undertaking, and begins reading the Bible mid-journey instead of attending to his duties. The commander's son, who is his junior officer and always addresses his father as "General," is forced to kill the old man when he tries to prevent the ship from landing on Mars. In this film, both sides of the ambivalence toward scientists are given voice. Generally, for a scientific enterprise to be treated entirely sympathetically in these films, it needs the certificate of utility. Science, viewed without ambivalence, means an efficacious response to danger. Disinterested intellectual curiosity rarely appears in any form other than caricature, as a maniacal dementia that cuts one off from normal human relations. But this suspicion is usually directed at the scientist rather than his work. The creative scientist may become a martyr to his own discovery, through an accident or by pushing things too far. The implication remains that other men, less imaginative—in short, tech-

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nicians—would administer the same scientific discovery better and more safely. The most ingrained contemporary mistrust of the intellect is visited, in these movies, upon the scientist-as-intellectual.

The message that the scientist is one who releases forces which, if not controlled for good, could destroy man himself seems innocuous enough. One of the oldest images of the scientist is Shakespeare's Prospero, the over-detached scholar forcibly retired from society to a desert island, only partly in control of the magic forces in which he dabbles. Equally classic is the figure of the scientist as satanist (*Dr. Faustus,* stories of Poe and Hawthorne). Science is magic, and man has always known that there is black magic as well as white. But it is not enough to remark that contemporary attitudes—as reflected in science fiction films—remain ambivalent, that the scientist is treated both as satanist and savior. The proportions have changed, because of the new context in which the old admiration and fear of the scientist is located. For his sphere of influence is no longer local, himself or his immediate community. It is planetary, cosmic.

One gets the feeling, particularly in the Japanese films, but not only there, that mass trauma exists over the use of nuclear weapons and the possibility of future nuclear wars. Most of the science fiction films bear witness to this trauma, and in a way, attempt to exorcise it.

The accidental awakening of the super-destructive monster who has slept in the earth since prehistory is, often, an obvious metaphor for the Bomb. But there are many explicit references as well. In *The Mysterians,* a probe ship from the planet Mysteroid has landed on earth, near Tokyo. Nuclear warfare having been practiced on Mysteroid for centuries (their civilization is "more advanced than ours"), 90 per cent of those now born on the planet have to be destroyed at birth, because of defects caused by the huge amounts of Strontium 90 in their diet. The Mysterians have come to earth to marry earth women and possibly to take over our relatively uncontaminated planet. . . . In *The Incredible Shrinking Man,* the John Doe hero is the victim of a gust of radiation which blows over the water, while he is out boating with his wife; the radiation causes him to grow smaller and smaller, until at the end of the movie he steps through the fine mesh of a window screen to become "the infinitely small. . . ." In *Rodan,* a horde of monstrous carnivorous prehistoric insects, and finally a pair of giant flying reptiles (the prehistoric Archeopteryx), are hatched from dormant eggs in the depths of a mine shaft by the impact of nuclear test explosions, and go on to destroy a good part of the world before they are felled by the molten lava of a volcanic eruption. . . . In the English film, *The Day the Earth Caught Fire,* two simultaneous hydrogen bomb tests by the U.S. and Russia change by eleven degrees the tilt of the earth on its axis and alter the earth's orbit so that it begins to approach the sun.

Radiation casualties—ultimately, the conception of the whole world as a casualty of nuclear testing and nuclear warfare—is the most ominous of all the notions with which science fiction films deal. Universes become expendable. Worlds become contaminated, burnt out, exhausted, obsolete. In *Rocketship X-M* (1950), explorers from Earth land on Mars, where they learn that atomic warfare has destroyed Martian civilization. In George Pal's *The War of the Worlds* (1953), reddish spindly alligator-skinned creatures from Mars invade Earth because their planet is becoming too cold to be habitable. In *This Island Earth,* also American, the planet Metaluna, whose population has long ago been driven underground by warfare, is dying under the missile attacks of an enemy planet. Stocks of uranium, which power the force-shield shielding Metaluna, have been used up; and an unsuccessful expedition is sent to Earth to enlist earth scientists to devise new sources of nuclear power.

THERE IS a vast amount of wishful thinking in science fiction films, some of it touching, some of it depressing. Again and again, one detects the hunger for a "good war," which poses no moral problems, admits of no moral qualifications. The imagery of science fiction films will satisfy the most bellicose addict of war films, for a lot of the satisfactions of war films pass, untransformed, into science fiction films. Examples: the dogfights between earth "fighter rockets" and alien spacecraft in the *Battle of Outer Space* (1959); the escalating firepower in the successive assaults upon the invaders in *The Mysterians,* which Dan Talbot correctly described as a nonstop holocaust; the spectacular bombardment of the underground fortress in *This Island Earth.*

Yet at the same time the bellicosity of science fiction films is neatly channeled into the yearning for peace, or for at least peaceful coexistence. Some scientist generally takes sententious note of the fact that it took the planetary invasion or cosmic disaster to make the warring nations of the earth come to their senses, and suspend their own conflicts. One of the main themes of many science fiction films—the color ones usually, because they have the budget and resources to develop the military spectacle—is this UN fantasy, a fantasy of united warfare. (The same wishful UN theme cropped up in a recent spectacular which is not science fiction, *Fifty-Five Days at Peking* [1963]. There, topically enough, the Chinese, the Boxers, play the role of Martian invaders who unite the earthmen, in this case the United States, Russia, England, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan.) A great enough disaster cancels all enmities, and calls upon the utmost concentration of the earth's resources.

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Science—technology—is conceived of as the great unifier. Thus the science fiction films also project a utopian fantasy. In the classic models of utopian thinking—Plato's Republic, Campanella's City of the Sun, More's Utopia, Swift's land of the Houyhnhnms, Voltaire's Eldorado—society had worked out a perfect consensus. In these societies reasonableness had achieved an unbreakable supremacy over the emotions. Since no disagreement or social conflict was intellectually plausible, none was possible. As in Melville's *Typee,* "they all think the same." The universal rule of reason meant universal agreement. It is interesting, too, that societies in which reason was pictured as totally ascendant were also traditionally pictured as having an ascetic and/or materially frugal and economically simple mode of life. But in the utopian world community projected by science fiction films, totally pacified and ruled by scientific concensus, the demand for simplicity of material existence would be absurd.

But alongside the hopeful fantasy of moral simplification and international unity embodied in the science fiction films, lurk the deepest anxieties about contemporary existence. I don't mean only the very real trauma of the Bomb—that it has been used, that there are enough now to kill everyone on earth many times over, that those new bombs may very well be used. Besides these new anxieties about physical disaster, the prospect of universal mutilation and even annihilation, the science fiction films reflect powerful anxieties about the condition of the individual psyche.

For science fiction films may also be described as a popular mythology for the contemporary *negative* imagination about the impersonal. The other-world creatures which seek to take "us" over, are an "it," not a "they." The planetary invaders are usually zombie-like. Their movements are either cool, mechanical, or lumbering, blobby. But it amounts to the same thing. If they are nonhuman in form, they proceed with an absolutely regular, unalterable movement (unalterable save by destruction). If they are human in form—dressed in space suits, etc.—then they obey the most rigid military discipline, and display no personal characteristics whatsoever. And it is this regime of emotionlessness, of impersonality, of regimentation, which they will impose on the earth if they are successful. "No more love, no more beauty, no more pain," boasts a converted earthling in *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956). The half earthling-half alien children in *The Children of the Damned* (1960) are absolutely emotionless, move as a group and understand each others' thoughts, and are all prodigious intellects. They are the wave of the future, man in his next stage of development.

These alien invaders practice a crime which is worse than murder. They do not simply kill the person. They obliterate him. In *The War of the Worlds,* the ray which issues from the rocket ship disintegrates all persons and objects in its path, leaving no trace of them but a light ash. In Honda's *The H-Men* (1959), the creeping blob melts all flesh with which it comes in contact. If the blob, which looks like a huge hunk of red jello, and can crawl across floors and up and down walls, so much as touches your bare boot, all that is left of you is a heap of clothes on the floor. (A more articulated, size-multiplying blob is the villain in the English film *The Creeping Unknown* [1956].) In another version of this fantasy, the body is preserved but the person is entirely reconstituted as the automatized servant or agent of the alien powers. This is, of course, the vampire fantasy in new dress. The person is really dead, but he doesn't know it. He's "undead," he has become an "unperson." It happens to a whole California town in *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* to several earth scientists in *This Island Earth,* and to assorted innocents in *It Came from Outer Space, Attack of the Puppet People* (1961), and *The Brain Eaters* (1961). As the victim always backs away from the vampire's horrifying embrace, so in science fiction films the person always fights being "taken over"; he wants to retain his humanity. But once the deed has been done, the victim is eminently satisfied with his condition. He has not been converted from human amiability to monstrous "animal" bloodlust (a metaphoric exaggeration of sexual desire), as in the old vampire fantasy. No, he has simply become far more efficient—the very model of technocratic man, purged of emotions, volitionless, tranquil, obedient to all orders. The dark secret behind human nature used to be the upsurge of the animal—as in *King Kong.* The threat to man, his availability to dehumanization, lay in his own animality. Now the danger is understood as residing in man's ability to be turned into a machine.

THE RULE, of course, is that this horrible and irremediable form of murder can strike anyone in the film except the hero. The hero and his family, while grossly menaced, always escape this fact and by the end of the film the invaders have been repulsed or destroyed. I know of only one exception, *The Day That Mars Invaded Earth* (1963), in which, after all the standard struggles, the scientist-hero, his wife, and their two children are "taken over" by the alien invaders—and that's that. (The last minutes of the film show them being incinerated by the Martians' rays and their ash silhouettes flushed down their empty swimming pool, while their simulacra drive off in the family car.) Another variant but upbeat switch on the rule occurs in *The Creation of the Humanoids* (1964), where the hero discovers at the end of the film that he, too, has been turned into a metal robot, complete with highly efficient and virtually indestructible mechanical

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insides, although he didn't know it and detected no difference in himself. He learns, however, that he will shortly be upgraded into a "humanoid" having all the properties of a real man.

Of all the standard motifs of science fiction films, this theme of dehumanization is perhaps the most fascinating. For, as I have indicated, it is scarcely a black-and-white situation, as in the vampire films. The attitude of the science fiction films toward depersonalization is mixed. On the one hand, they deplore it as the ultimate horror. On the other hand, certain characteristics of the dehumanized invaders, modulated and disguised —such as the ascendancy of reason over feelings, the idealization of teamwork and the consensus-creating activities of science, a marked degree of moral simplification—are precisely traits of the savior-scientists. For it is interesting that when the scientist in these films is treated negatively, it is usually done through the portrayal of an individual scientist who holes up in his laboratory and neglects his fiancée or his loving wife and children, obsessed by his daring and dangerous experiments. The scientist as a loyal member of a team, and therefore considerably less individualized, is treated quite respectfully.

There is absolutely no social criticism, of even the most implicit kind, in science fiction films. No criticism, for example, of the conditions of our society which create the impersonality and dehumanization which science fiction fantasies displace onto the influence of an alien It. Also, the notion of science as a social activity, interlocking with social and political interests, is unacknowledged. Science is simply either adventure (for good or evil) or a technical response to danger. And, typically, when the fear of science is paramount—when science is conceived of as black magic rather than white—the evil has no attribution beyond that of the perverse will of an individual scientist. In science fiction films the antithesis of black magic and white is drawn as a split between technology, which is beneficent, and the errant individual will of a lone intellectual.

Thus, science fiction films can be looked at as thematically central allegory, replete with standard modern attitudes. The theme of depersonalization (being "taken over") which I have been talking about is a new allegory reflecting the age-old awareness of man that, sane, he is always perilously close to insanity and unreason. But there is something more here than just a recent, popular image which expresses man's perennial, but largely unconscious, anxiety about his sanity. The image derives most of its power from a supplementary and historical anxiety, also not experienced *consciously* by most people, about the depersonalizing conditions of modern urban society. Similarly, it is not enough to note that science fiction allegories are one of the new myths about —that is, ways of accommodating to and negating —the perennial human anxiety about death. (Myths of heaven and hell, and of ghosts, had the same function.) Again, there is a historically specifiable twist which intensifies the anxiety, or better, the trauma suffered by everyone in the middle of the 20th century when it became clear that from now on to the end of human history, every person would spend his individual life not only under the threat of individual death, which is certain, but of something almost unsupportable psychologically—collective incineration and extinction which could come any time, virtually without warning.

From a psychological point of view, the imagination of disaster does not greatly differ from one period in history to another. But from a political and moral point of view, it does. The expectation of the apocalypse may be the occasion for a radical disaffiliation from society, as when thousands of Eastern European Jews in the 17th century gave up their homes and businesses and began to trek to Palestine upon hearing that Shabbethai Zevi had been proclaimed Messiah and that the end of the world was imminent. But peoples learn the news of their own end in diverse ways. It is reported that in 1945 the populace of Berlin received without great agitation the news that Hitler had decided to kill them all, before the Allies arrived, because they had not been worthy enough to win the war. We are, alas, more in the position of the Berliners than of the Jews of 17th-century Eastern Europe; and our response is closer to theirs, too. What I am suggesting is that the imagery of disaster in science fiction films is above all the emblem of an *inadequate response*. I do not mean to bear down on the films for this. They themselves are only a sampling, stripped of sophistication, of the inadequacy of most people's response to the unassimilable terrors that infect their consciousness. The interest of the films, aside from their considerable amount of cinematic charm, consists in this intersection between a naïvely and largely debased commercial art product and the most profound dilemmas of the contemporary situation.

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HENRY FAIRLIE

JOHNSON & THE INTELLECTUALS

A British View

DURING THE TIME that I have been in the United States, I have found nothing more strange or more unattractive than the way in which American intellectuals take pleasure in reviling President Johnson. It is not simply that they object to his policies in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. It is a feeling of strong personal revulsion. "He is a slob," one of them said to me when I asked him whey he disliked the President so much. Others say much the same, if less briefly.

I have little doubt that this scorn for President Johnson as a person is one of the causes of the rather strained character of the current debate on American foreign policy. It makes the critics of his policies appear much more united than in fact they are, because they can always meet on this single point of fastidious disdain for the man. It gives their criticisms an edge which is quite incidental to their actual arguments, and lends them an excitement which titillates but is unserious. Above all, it exaggerates the barrier between them and the President, so that there is a real danger that they will cease to be able to communicate at all.

The fault, I wish to suggest, is not entirely President Johnson's. There may be much about him, as there is about any politician, which is hard to stomach. To put it delicately, he invites the severest aesthetic judgments. But that is exactly my point: I am not at all sure that such judgments have any place in political discussion.

The role of the intellectual in American political life is, of course, bewildering to an Englishman, and I find myself wondering how any sensitive intellect can bear, without damage or derangement, the solemn importance which is attached to the intellectual in the public life of this country. The real intellectual, I would have thought, must demur at such a questionable exaltation.

The professor who allows himself to become a speech-writer to a Presidential candidate or a special assistant to a President; the poet who allows himself to be tempted to participate in a Presidential inauguration; the academic economist who leaves his university to become an ambassador: each of these (and the examples in America could be multiplied) I regard as a loss, with no adequate compensating gain. Even the amount of time given to a teach-in points, surely, to a lack of severe intellectual discipline in the intellectuals who take part.

Still, I recognize that this is a national habit, which will not be changed. The dearly bought, and even more dearly maintained, privacy of the intellectual life is something for which American intellectuals have scant regard, and on which they put a small price whenever public prominence beckons. But this is how they seem to want it, and I am concerned only to point out the obvious traps which lie in wait. For in these I see part of the explanation of their present disillusionment with President Johnson.

REMOVED from his own discipline, no one is more vain than the intellectual. Precisely because his mind is able to handle ideas with ease and excitement, it is all too easily turned when he is invited to discourse outside his own field. Inside his own field, the intellectual would never lay claim to omniscience, and seldom to authority. Outside it, his claim to both is breathtaking. A man who, having devoted his life to the study of some exact historical event, would hesitate to suggest the multiple reasons why it occurred, has no hesitation in analyzing the situation in Vietnam and predicting, say, the Vietcong reaction to a hypothetical situation.

That he should do so at all is bad enough. But far worse is the fact that, in doing so, he cannot help resorting to an all but dishonest, and an all but contemptible, use of the methods he has learned inside his discipline. I know of few things more virtuous than the methods of the intellectual used to a fit purpose: it is all the greater prostitution, therefore, when they are employed for the purposes of largely polemical debate. Professor Michael Oakeshott has said that politics is an inappropriate activity for the young, not because of their vices, but because of their virtues. Much the same is true of the intellectual.

But his vanity leads him on; and it is his vanity which explains why, when he engages in public events, he is the most easily seduced "joiner" of

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them all. He will sign almost any round-robin protest. Day by day, the stereotyped literature of protest—"We, the undersigned, representing the arts, humanities and sciences in the United States . . ."—falls onto his breakfast table, and he takes out his pen to make his broad-minded challenge to the forces of evil in the world, amidst the Rice Krispies. "I think you're quite right," his wife comforts him, caring for his digestion.

It has been suggested by one of the wittiest columnists in England that there is an organization called "Rent-a-Crowd," which hires out crowds that can demonstrate anywhere, against anything. I sometimes feel that there must be a similar agency on Madison Avenue, called "Rent-a-Signature," which collects and supplies, for a reasonable charge, the signatures of intellectuals. But, of course, the agency would fail: seeing what the intellectual will sign simply out of his own vanity, why bother to pay him?

The most serious consequence of the vanity of the intellectual is that he is so pathetically flattered by power. The politician is the most guileful of flatterers, the intellectual his most guileless victim. As long as the politician can be seen to be what he is—a trader for votes—the intellectual does not find it difficult to remain untouched by him. But as soon as the politician dresses himself up in fancy clothes, glamorizing his office and his power, the intellectual is a sucker for his favors; and the American intellectual, it seems to me, although one should be able to assume he is beyond the age of consent, was raped by President Kennedy.

At all times, and no matter who exercises it, power is ugly and brutalizing: President Kennedy was allowed to make it appear attractive and redeeming. Power is shoddy: President Kennedy was allowed to glamorize it. Power is for the aged: President Kennedy was allowed to cast over it the magic of youth. Power is un-intellectual: President Kennedy was allowed to give it intellectual excitement. Power is safe only if it is exercised without enchantment, without claim to reason, and without pretense to virtue: President Kennedy was allowed to endow it with all three. Power is, no doubt, necessary: President Kennedy was allowed to make it seem desirable.

I have tried to be careful in this last paragraph. I have not blamed President Kennedy for doing, or for trying to do, these things: a politician is entitled to use every trick he knows, and President Kennedy had the wit to know more than most. My complaint is that he was allowed to do them without the intellectual reacting with wariness, skepticism and, ultimately, rejection. If the intellectual is going to be fastidious about politics, he should revolt, not against President Johnson for making politics look as beastly as it is, but against a President Kennedy for making it look gracious, for appropriating to it virtues which it does not possess.

(I do not doubt, I should perhaps interject, that the politics of a free state does have virtue. But that virtue lies simply in the exercise of their vote by millions of ordinary, and otherwise unpowerful people: in the act itself, and not in the rightness or wrongness of what they do with it. The virtue—the grace—does not lie in any other part of the process, and certainly not in the man of power, the politician.)

If they could only see it, the intellectuals would realize that President Johnson has cleansed them or, at least, given them the opportunity to cleanse themselves. He does not make the pretense that political decision is a debate between intellectually upright ideas; and when he does, he reassuringly comes a cropper. He does not ask the arts to place a garland on his head; and when he does, it is the predictable farce of the Festival of Arts at the White House. He does not call intellectuals away from their gentle pursuits; and when he does, he gains the services of only very rum intellectuals indeed. The intellectual is on his own again, and it is to me a tragedy that he should react by pining again for political enchantment.

AN ENGLISH political philosopher has said that the scorn which people have for their politicians is "the rage of Caliban at seeing his face in the glass." But it is the face of Caliban which one should see reflected when one looks at a politician; and President Johnson is, by this reckoning, a most reassuring politician. How much more demeaning to be spirited away by Ariel, to gaze on politics as Ferdinand mooned over Miranda—with Mr. Theodore Sorensen, a wily and prematurely aged Prospero, always at one's elbow with his old wizard's incantations about power.

Mr. Sorensen's lectures on the Presidency (published under the title *Decision Making in the White House*) seem to me one of the most dreadful celebrations of political power that I have ever read; and I am prepared to take a bet that the objectionable feature of his forthcoming book on President Kennedy will not be the praise of the President, which is legitimate, but the praise of political power as such.

For this, of course, is another of the traps into which an American intellectual is likely to fall if he allows himself to be entangled in politics. The Presidency, because it is not simply a political office, is easily exalted. In Mr. Theodore H. White's *The Making of the President, 1960*, there is one horrifying sentence. On the night of the results, he wrote, the newspaper correspondents "itched to be with the winner. Closeness to power heightens the dignity of all men." It does nothing of the sort; and newspaper correspondents, I presume and hope, "itched to be with the winner" only because it meant that they would have the better stories.

Mr. Averell Harriman, talking about President Truman's failure to dismiss petty grafters from

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federal positions, some of whom had access to the White House, said: "What he doesn't realize is that the American people regard the White House as a national shrine which is not to be sullied by even the appearance of misdoing." I do not believe that the American people regard the White House as anything of the kind; like all mature electorates, they have a far more sophisticated view of politics, of how Presidents are made and how they then maintain themselves in office, than intellectuals allow them. But there seems to me no doubt that President Kennedy was able to tempt intellectuals into regarding the White House as part court and part shrine; and the rediscovery that it is a profane altar after all is understandably painful.

The intellectual saw in President Kennedy, in perhaps more ways than one, a silk purse. There is, thankfully, no mistaking the sow's ear in President Johnson. (In fact, of course, some intellectuals when they touched the silk purse found, at the time, that it was a sow's ear after all—but this now tends to be forgotten.) Mr. Robert Lowell had the right idea when he refused to attend the Festival of Arts, but he gave the wrong reason. Instead of woozily muttering about Vietnam, he should have simply replied that as a poet he could not entertain such an invitation, that he had no intention of allowing his muse to pay homage to a political office. What a grotesque thought it is that, if his views on Vietnam had happened to be different, Mr. Lowell might have solemnly read "For the Union Dead" to Mrs. Lyndon Johnson. That one can recognize that it is grotesque—as it might not have seemed three years ago—is a measure of President Johnson's virtuous (if unintended) gift to the American people. By contrast, it is still hard to forgive President Kennedy for inviting the late Robert Frost to participate in his inauguration, or Frost for acquiescing in the debauch.

I do not understand what an artist like Mr. William Walton was doing, beating the drums for a politician, and a Boston politician at that—for friendship provides neither excuse nor explanation for such a bemusement with power. Nor do I understand what Mr. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., whose *The Age of Jackson* has always seemed to me one of the most thrilling attainments of a young historian, is doing in Washington at all, away from his rigorous profession (for contemporary history is not academic history), still sniffing at the hems of power—any more than anyone seems able to explain to me what he ever did in the White House in the first place. Above all, for his is both a rare spirit and a rare intellect, I do not understand what Professor Galbraith ever thought he was up to, allowing himself to be sidetracked into becoming ambassador to India—a post not obviously calling for intellectual gifts (as Mr. Harold Wilson seems to have acknowledged by appointing the editor of the *New Statesman*)—and Professor Galbraith does not, in the end, seem to have understood, either.

Intellectuals (and poets and artists) should realize that President Johnson has mercifully released them from the feeling that they owe the state a due, and one may even believe that the editor of the *New Republic* is safe from exile to New Delhi. When I read that Miss Phyllis McGinley has been dispatched as ambassador to London, I will know that the world of the intellect is again safe from the political procurer.

Mr. Harold Macmillan, himself a man of civilized and engaging intellect, has enjoyed over the years the friendship or acquaintance of many of the most considerable intellectuals in Britain. But it would never have occurred to him to debase their friendship, or their office in society *as intellectuals,* by asking them to undertake his political chores for him. The nearest he came to exacting a political function from any of them was when he permitted Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper to arrange his election as Chancellor of Oxford University, a most skilfully organized political campaign. There seems to me a fitness in this, and the American intellectual, before he disdains President Johnson, might do well to consider whether he has not neglected, in the past, this sense of fitness, whether the very personal qualities he dislikes in President Johnson are not in fact saving graces, whether it is not fortunate that political decision and the political process should again be seen clearly for what they are.

For the intellectual, of course, cannot easily apprehend politics, and anything which tempts him to believe that he can make sense either *of* the political process or *in* the political process is dangerous both to him and to the politician, but above all to the desirable communication between them. I cannot see how this communication can fruitfully take place unless both observe some fitness in their roles, acknowledge the limits of their own fields and use, with precision, their own methods and instruments without borrowing each other's. Only in this way can the exchange between them be illuminating. To put it another way, if the intellectual wishes to engage himself directly in the political process, he can only do it as Mr. McGeorge Bundy has done, by ceasing to be an intellectual, as such, and becoming a politician, as such. The difference was seen brilliantly in Mr. Bundy's annihilation of Professor Hans J. Morgenthau during the CBS teach-in.

Characteristically—for he is one of the very few Washington commentators who seem to me to write about politics at all, to recognize the political process for what it is and to write about it as it is—Mr. Joseph Kraft put his finger on the point in an article, "Kennedy and the Intellectuals," in *Harper's,* when he observed the difference between the effectiveness of those intellectuals who had

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properly, almost anonymously, become part of the political machine and those "who supposed they could work closely with the President, and thus shake off the bureaucratic trammels." Mr. Kraft quoted, with devastating effect, Professor Galbraith's complaint that there seemed now in politics to be no place for "the broken-field runner." In fact, of course, there never is a place for him in politics, save in exceptional circumstances, such as war, when normal political processes are in abeyance. The whole point of politics is that you cover every lap closely bunched together, and if anyone breaks away, you have a political crisis.

Unless, then, the intellectual submerges himself in politics, and in so doing ceases to be an intellectual, he will go on misapprehending the political process, expecting both too much of it and too little, imagining that it can achieve dramatic results and ignoring the quiet, usually unsung, results which it achieves in its own way.

The sternest axiom which a politician must obey is that he must not be tempted into seizing imaginary initiatives: the intellectual temperamentally believes that the opportunity for them is always there. The sternest obligation of a politician is that he must live with problems that he cannot solve, and must handle them without necessarily seeking a solution: temperamentally, the intellectual cannot bear a problem that is incapable of solution. The sternest rule which a politician must observe is that he is not acting for the future, for history, but simply for today: the intellectual temperamentally gazes into the future, forward into history. He does not as a general rule care for the untidiness—the intractability—of the present.

The raw materials with which a politician in a free state must work are usually intractable: interests which conflict, and are hard to reconcile; wills which he cannot command, but at best only persuade; resources which are limited, and on which the claims are manifold; support which must be weighed and re-weighed, and may at any time wither away; problems whose nature can only be dimly, usually intuitively, perceived, but of which he must dispose, even if in ignorance. He is a painter who cannot mix his own paints; a potter who cannot choose his own clay; a composer who must score for a brass band what he had perhaps intended for a string quartet. That is the measure of his art.

That President Johnson is a great practitioner of the art is hardly denied: then why not look at him, as such; and, if one wishes, dispute with him, as such? But this is precisely the quandary in which the intellectual finds himself, for he is lost (as he should be lost) in the art of politics. "The American liberal," a Negro lawyer who works on Capitol Hill said to me, "is more interested in style than in substance"; and, again and again, American liberal intellectuals have asked me about the "style" of Mr. Harold Wilson, and complained in turn about the "style" of President Johnson. This aestheticism is not only quite irrelevant to politics; it reduces the real impact which the intellectual could, and should, have in political debate. It sharpens the edge of his criticism; it blunts the point of his attack.

Whether President Johnson is a "slob" or not is not really of interest, for he is a supreme political artist, brilliant (at least this will be conceded) in the proper political arts of flattering, cajoling, bartering, bribing, purchasing, intimidating, and (if necessary) trampling. But these are precisely the arts which the intellectual cannot employ in return and, consequently, if he engages directly in day-to-day political issues, he usually misses the target.

When I arrived in this country in March, the honeymoon between the intellectuals and the President was becoming strained, but it had not come to an end. Since then, I have been able to watch their growing doubt, disappointment, and disillusion. Doubt, disappointment, and disillusion being the proper intellectual attitude to power, I expected the intellectuals to welcome this return to a fit view of life. Instead, they have grown sour and savage—with a man who seems to me simply to be behaving as every politician does—and their reaction exposes, with a wonderful clarity, exactly why the intellectual who engages in current politics is usually lost.

FIRST, *the intellectual is seldom able to understand the nature of a political decision.* When Mr. Attlee's Cabinet had to consider whether Turkey should be allowed to become a member of NATO, the discussion went round the table, and every possible political, economic, and strategic argument was put forward, especially by Aneurin Bevan. At last the moment came for Mr. Attlee to "collect the voices." (In the tradition of British Prime Ministers, he had until then been silent.) "Fought against the Turks at Gallipoli," he snapped. "Would rather have them on our side than the enemy's. We'll have them in."

That is, almost perfectly illustrated, political decision; and it amazes me how American intellectuals today go around shocking each other with stories about, say, how the decision to intervene in the Dominican Republic was taken. After twenty years of watching politics fairly closely, it would not in the least surprise me if I were told that it had been taken for an even more outlandish reason than Mr. Attlee gave to his Cabinet—or even that it was not, in any rational sense, "taken" at all.

"I am not sure that there is really such a thing as 'power' or 'decision,' " one of Britain's greatest Prime Ministers said to me, when I was talking to him at the end of his career. "I would certainly find it very hard to give you an example of when I have ever exercised power or taken a decision. Of course, I will try to make it all look very

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different in my memoirs: and, if I am lucky, part of my version will be accepted by historians, and then I will be called a great statesman. But it all happens very differently. For one thing, there is just a build-up of big and small events, of big and small factors, and they may not be brought to your notice until the issue has already been decided; and, when you eventually have to decide, it may be in response to the smallest of them all. That is not 'power' or 'decision'; you are too much in the hands of events. For another thing, the in-tray is always full. That is what politics is: trying to empty the in-tray."

But, of course, a President and a Prime Minister cannot wait until they write their memoirs to provide the justification or the rationalization of their decisions; they have to provide it immediately, and in public, to the world. A President Kennedy and a Mr. Macmillan were masters at presenting their "decisions" in great historical perspectives, and in magic vistas of intellectual enchantment. They were both men who, when they took the field, took it panoplied and accoutred, bestowing on their political decisions a quite unlikely majesty.

It is, therefore, an awful bump to come down to President Johnson's description of how he took the decision to intervene in the Dominican Republic. (Read it out of its context—and Mr. Art Buchwald could not make power look more laughable.) In one sense, I do not accept President Johnson's version any more than I would have accepted the more self-conscious versions of President Kennedy or Mr. Macmillan; precisely because he is not used to intellectualizing his processes, President Johnson made them seem even more bizarre than they can, in fact, have been. All the same, his description of how a political decision is taken was much nearer to the truth than we care to realize.

I have listened to many descriptions of how President Johnson is supposed to take decisions—"He is ego-blocked, but not ego-distorted," was the quite solemn comment of one intellectual of renown—and I am left with the impression that he takes them for exactly the same reasons of personal and party interest, of political pressure and the pressure of events, as does any politician. If intellectuals could only forget his "style" (which, I remember saying when I first observed him in the flesh at a press conference, is really that of a Texas Macmillan), they might have more time to consider the substance of the interests and pressures to which—quite legitimately—he reacts.

The American intellectual might certainly ask himself whether much of his disdain for President Johnson's manner is not the result of a rather questionable hankering after the patrician in politics. After all, the Americans maintain a political system which gives a terrible advantage to wealth—the role which wealth played in President Kennedy's campaign for the nomination is, to an outsider, frightening—and it is, therefore, quite understandable to find the wealth and background of, say, the Roosevelts, Kennedys, and Rockefellers more bearable than the wealth and background of the Johnsons. But the motives, to say the least, are mixed, and I am not sure that it is healthy that the relationship between wealth and power in this country should be made to look congenial simply by a patrician manner. At least the "style" of President Johnson enables one to see it for what it is.

SECONDLY, *the intellectual imports into current political issues ideas which, although valuable in themselves, cannot be entertained in day-to-day politics.* It is part of his temperament—although this is far more true of the American than the British intellectual—that he finds power exciting, and that he is especially excited by the idea of vast and subterranean forces which are at work, implacably holding mankind in their grip. This is one reason, as has often been remarked, why he falls (usually on his face) for any "conspiracy" view of politics, or any grand theory of "historical inevitability," which happens to be going the rounds.

When Mr. Bundy referred on the CBS teach-in to Professor Morgenthau's "congenital pessimism," he was not making simply a debating point: he was making a precise and damaging intellectual one, exposing the irrelevance of Professor Morgenthau's intellectual concepts to political decision. Part of Professor Morgenthau's method is to build (and to rebuild, wherever necessary) elaborate frameworks of historical prediction and then to surrender to his guesses. That he surrenders to them is his own business. That he then asks politicians to surrender to them—to guess with him woefully at the future, and to abdicate all political choice to his presentiments—is an alarming intellectual conceit.

When the politician thinks that he hears the crack of doom—and it is the crack of doom which reverberates in Professor Morgenthau's head—he has lost the nerve for the game, and should get out.

It is an intolerable idea that any politician should abandon the present to the inscrutable future, that he should abandon present commitments to the obscure possibility that they may become insupportable, that he should abandon present opportunities to the dark fear that the situation may be worse tomorrow. You never can tell what tomorrow may bring. Winston Churchill, if he had surrendered the present to the future in 1940, would have surrendered Britain, too: the future, at the time, seemed all too clear. But he lived and acted, during those months, entirely in the present. Today, he said, is enough: and, when each new today came, we were still there.

Again, it is a common intellectual fascination to imagine that there is such a thing as the real

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national interest. This, certainly, is the claim made—sometimes explicitly, always implicitly—by Mr. Walter Lippmann in his present criticisms of the administration's policies. He claims, moreover, not only that there is such a thing as America's real national interest (which is doubtful), but that it can be discovered (which is certainly untrue), and that the politician should make it his business to discover it and obey it (which is alarming).

To concede that the politician can and should discover the real national interest, is to concede, also, that he may have discovered it, and therefore to leave no philosophical justification for questioning his actions. It is the claim made by all dictators, and there has always been, in Mr. Lippmann's political philosophy, this strong pull toward authoritarianism, toward the idea that there are some who know best what is good for the nation, the people, at large.

But this is not the immediate point. The fact is that the politician cannot be concerned with the "real" national interest, because he is bound to deal with observable facts. The idea of a real national interest is a metaphysical concept—useful to the intellectual as an instrument, but, as has been proved by several million deaths over the past hundred and fifty years, dangerous if taken literally—which has nothing to do with actuality. None of us today can *know* the real national interest of America in Southeast Asia; history will still be arguing about it a thousand years from now. The politician, therefore, must be concerned with less grand concepts: whether it is just possible to stay; whether it is just possible to meet a commitment; whether it is just possible that this risk may be more justifiable than that. For risk is the inner nature of all political decision.

"There is an important difference," Mr. Bundy said on the CBS teach-in, "between the best one can do within the framework of one's existing commitments and quitting too soon." In those deeply satisfying words there is all the qualification, all the hesitation, all the doubt, all the lack of dogma, of the real political choice. It is untidy; it leaves every end untied; it offers no clear-cut answer, since there is no answer until it happens. To the intellectual, of course, it is unsatisfactory; but that is precisely why we have politicians, so that they may cope with the untidiness of the present for us.

If Churchill had consulted Britain's "real" national interest in 1940, he would have made as fast and favorable an armistice with Germany as possible. But he did not, and it should be realized that his defiance was justified, not by Britain's heroism or Britain's strength, for the one could have been trampled on and the other was nonexistent, but by an imponderable: the fact that Hitler proceeded to miscalculate, that he thought he could leave Britain aside while he turned to conquer the East. No one could have foreseen such a frantic miscalculation by Hitler—yet, without it, Churchill's resistance would have been a lamentable misconception of Britain's real national interests.

In these and in every other concept which the intellectual uses in the discussion of current politics, he assumes a knowledge which the politician knows is not available, and argues with a certainty which the politician is bound to eschew. The charismatic leader—and President Kennedy had many of the qualities of one—will always present political decision with something of this certainty. I feel much safer with the inconclusive, even messy, arguments of the present administration.

LASTLY, *the intellectual in America, by the prominence which he accepts in political life, distracts attention from the real business of politics.* Politics is, first and foremost, the eliciting, even the manufacture, of support. With all respect to the intellectuals at home, and to the qualms of some governments abroad, President Johnson is today acting with a breadth of support, and a lack of effective opposition, which strike awe in any open-eyed observer. I do not, personally, like it; I do not think it healthy that a democracy should have become so lopsided that no source of *political* opposition is easily to be found. This was the point made by a British colleague, Mr. Patrick O'Donovan, when he wrote recently in the Washington *Post* that Washington had become a one man town.

The fault is not President Johnson's; it is the duty, as it is the right, of any political leader to seek the maximum support for his policies that he can. Where, then, does the fault lie?

It lies, first, in the stampede to President Johnson last November. America is today paying the political price for voting as if the choice were between right and wrong, between good and evil. No one assisted in presenting the choice in these terms more effectively than the intellectuals. When they should have been skulking in their lairs, using the quiet but insistent voice of the intellectual to warn that a stampede to one leader or one party is always democracy's dearest mistake, they instead helped to whip up the stampede. It was the intellectuals, as much as anyone, who created the Colossus; they, as much as anyone, who worked for the annihilation of one of the great parties of the state; they, as much as anyone, who provided the reasons why a democracy should elect a dictator.

Moreover, they still (in political terms) argue with their hands tied. President Johnson's strength rests entirely on support for his domestic program. There is only one way of damaging him, only one way of bartering with him, and that is by obstructing his domestic program. It is, quite simply, impossible to allow him a "consensus" at home, and deny it to him abroad. Politics is, in this sense, one. It is quite permissible to welcome

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the collapse of the Southern bloc in the Senate; but democracy will not be healthy until another —more than one—self-interested bloc emerges, ready and able to bargain with the executive, ready and able to engage the President on every front, to achieve its own selfish ends on one.

To put it quite simply, President Johnson, by his domestic program, has bribed the nation. The only way of attacking him is to refuse the bribe.

Political needs require precise political action. But this is what public opinion cannot provide today, since it is greedy for the bribes which President Johnson offers; it is what no party can provide, since the opposition party was deliberately undermined last November, by a campaign of frivolous irresponsibility; and it is what Congress cannot supply, since it dare not be seen to refuse the bribes which the President offers to their constituents. It is to this distortion of the political process that intellectuals should be paying deep attention, the urgent need for finding, *inside politics,* centers of disaffection, which can then flatter, cajole, barter, purchase, arm-twist, intimidate, and trample at least as effectively as the Chief Executive.

Beside this urgent need, a "campus revolt" is not only irrelevance but a dangerous distraction.

Nothing that I have said is intended to scoff at either political or intellectual activity. Both, in a free country, have great virtue. I have merely made a plea that the two should be kept separate, and that it is primarily the fault of the American intellectual that the two have become confused. The intellectual cannot engage in current political discussion and hope, at the same time, to think deeply or precisely. He should be using his mind now to inquire into the long-term meaning of America's huge power, into the relevance of her institutions to a situation in which this power inescapably exists, and so must inescapably confer still greater power on the executive, into the survival of powerful and independent blocs in a country which is geared more and more to federal activity and federal money. All of these, and so many more, are proper fields of intellectual inquiry, and the intellectual should be satisfied that, if he uses his instruments well, any truth which he may happen to discover will, in time, and not necessarily a long time at that, filter down into the bloodstream of the country.

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On Reading Matthew

MILTON HIMMELFARB

Judeo-Christian?

Does the Judeo-Christian tradition exist? There has been much talk about it, especially since the Vatican Council, but to talk about a thing does not necessarily mean that the thing is real. A Judeo-Christian tradition, if it existed, by its nature would have to be ancient and Palestinian-Mediterranean; but the talk seems to be mostly modern and Western, not to say American. One is apt to be suspicious.

From the Jewish side it is generally the Orthodox and the Zionists who are most suspicious. For the Orthodox, a Christian who talks about a Judeo-Christian tradition is now trying to seduce Jews by gentleness and fair words, after the failure of violence and threats to compel them; and a Jew who talks about it, sinfully denying the uniqueness of Judaism, is helping the Christian seducers. For the Zionists, the talk has nothing to do with theology or sacred history, but is only another of the many stratagems Jews in the Diaspora have used to protect their civic equality and to fool themselves into believing that they need not go up to Israel for their safety and dignity.

Both the Orthodox and the Zionist suspicions may be examined in recent numbers of *De'ot*, an Israeli quarterly that describes itself as the publication of the religious (i.e., Orthodox) academics. In the latest number I have seen there is a comment by Eliezer Livneh. Livneh, who must be respected for his independence above all, is neither an academic nor, I am pretty sure, Orthodox, but he is a Zionist. Denying "a common Judeo-Christian heritage," he tells us that Christianity was really "only one of the currents of late Hellenism, which succeeded in becoming a world religion. . . . Besides innocent causes for discovering a Judeo-Christian 'partnership,' there enters into the picture conscious apologetics. . . . This is not at all innocent: it is a Diaspora-Jewish [*yehudit-galutit*] propaganda instrument, especially in the United States, for 'public relations.' Its spiritual worth is nil." *Galuti* can have about it something of the contempt that American Negroes give to "Tom."

Livneh is advancing two arguments here: that Christianity is not Jewish but Hellenistic in origin, and that "the Judeo-Christian tradition" is a Diaspora-Jewish ideology. The first is more serious than the second. An ideology arises to justify the interests and aims of those who hold it, but it is a fallacy—the genetic fallacy—to believe that knowing about the birth and function of an idea proves its untruth. Equality is the ideology of those who have been kept inferior. May we conclude that equality is a false idea?

Livneh declares flatly that Christianity's origin is Hellenistic, not Jewish. As they say, everyone is entitled to an opinion, but his is only that. Intertestamental literature, early Christianity, late Hellenism, and contemporaneous Judaism are not his fields. They are the fields of David Daube, the Regius Professor of Civil Law at Oxford who is also a traditional Jew, and Daube sees Christian orgins as very Jewish indeed. Even more persuasive is the testimony of David Flusser of the Hebrew University, the Israeli scholar Edmund Wilson wrote about in his book on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

According to Wilson, Flusser was irreligious then, but he does not seem to be now, if we may judge from the two pieces of his in the same issue of *De'ot* Livneh was in. Livneh appears to be unaware that in the *Festschrift* for Isaac Fritz Baer a few years ago, Flusser published a study, uncompromisingly titled "The Jewish Origin of Christianity," that was impatient with the *Enlightened commonplace about Hellenistic origins*. Flusser's person deflects arguments based on the genetic fallacy. About the thing itself, the relation of Christianity to Judaism, the English summary of his study says this:

> . . . paganism had very little effect on the origins of Christianity . . . . the tension between Christianity and Judaism can better be explained by the operation of Jewish centrifugal forces in the new religion . . .:
> (1) Rabbinic Judaism, which was the origin of the religious personality of Jesus and of the mother-church of Jerusalem; (2) the Essene movement, which influenced the second stratum of Christianity, dominated by the religious personalities of Paul and John the Evangelist, and (3) Hellenistic Judaism, which influenced Christian apologetics.

In the first note to his text, Flusser cautions: "Of course this does not mean that Christianity is

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Jewish, or a Judaism of a certain kind. . . . The forces that led to the rise of Christianity, though their origin was in Judaism, brought about Christianity's independence and separation from the body of Judaism."

Of course. Christianity is distinct from Judaism. What would be the point of asking about a Judeo-Jewish tradition?

* * * *

Matthew: Language and Text

Ever since Wilson's essay "On First Reading Genesis," I have wondered how it would be to examine the Greek New Testament as he examined the Hebrew Bible, but I got around to it only with the current debate over the Judeo-Christian tradition. *Ad fontes*—back to the sources. This is a report on the first book, Matthew.

Wilson's fondness for deducing a people's timeless character and mentality from language must impress a linguist pretty much as a fondness for phrenology would impress a psychologist. Reading a text in its original language will not lay bare the soul of a people—or even, for most of us, reveal nuances blurred in translation. The first advantage of reading in a foreign language, above all if you do not know it well, is that you must slow down. Nowadays we have to make our way through such masses of print that all of us are speed-readers, whether or not we have taken the course. With an important text, read slowly; but that is hard to do when its language is yours and the text seems easy. Until I read Matthew slowly, I thought I remembered the argument in Chapter 15 as being against the prohibition of non-kosher food. In fact it is against having to wash the hands before eating.

The other advantage is that ambiguities are preserved. Translations have a way of being more definite than originals. For instance, in the Lord's Prayer (6:13) the Authorized (or King James) Version has ". . . deliver us from evil"; so has the Revised Standard Version, but adds a note: "Or *the evil one,*" while the New English Bible has " . . . save us from the evil one." Slightly earlier in the Sermon on the Mount (5:39) KJV had "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil"; RSV, " . . . Do not resist one who is evil," and NEB, " . . . Do not set yourself against the man who wrongs you." On the basis of the language alone, "deliver us from a wicked man" and "do not resist the Devil" are as possible as what the versions give us. (Context makes the second a bit less likely than the first.)

Ambiguity goes beyond language, to the text itself. RSV's translators say explicitly that they often prefer other Greek manuscripts to the ones King James's translators worked on, and words, phrases, even entire verses differ. Three examples: 1. KJV ends the Lord's Prayer with "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." RSV does not include this. 2. In 19: 9, according to KJV it is adulterous to marry a divorced woman, but not according to RSV. RSV: "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery." KJV: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: *and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*" (But compare 5:32. Luke [16: 18] does not recognize Matthew's exception for unchastity: "Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." Matthew was edging way from Luke's uncompromising doctrine. The End of Days kept receding and life had to go on.) 3. In 24: 36 it is KJV that omits and RSV that adds. KJV: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but my Father only;" RSV: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, *nor the Son,* but the Father only." The theological significance of saying the Son is inferior to the Father is obvious.

For a Jew the instability of the New Testament is all the more striking because he is accustomed to a firmly stable Hebrew Bible (*christiane,* "Old Testament"). The differences between the text of Kittel's Biblia Hebraica and the Hebrew Bible lying before King James's translators are minute, mostly in vowel-signs and accents, but the differences between Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece and KJV's New Testament are many and weighty.

But even a stable text does not do away with ambiguity. Take the *Shema'*: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one." Its conclusion can be translated, and has been, in at least three more ways: the LORD is our God, the LORD is one; the LORD our God is one LORD; the LORD is our God, the LORD alone. (As if that were not enough, *shema'* itself can be not only "hear" but something additional as well.)

* * * *

THE FIRST effect of Matthew's language is a kind of amazement. Why should Jews be talking Greek? All those polysyllables—like *katadikasthese* (*i*), "you will be condemned" (12: 37)—so unlike Hebrew and Aramaic. But immediately one hears the Jewish language under the Greek. "And it came to pass," which KJV retains faithfully, is not Greek but biblical Hebrew: *wa-yehi.* "Answering he said"—e.g., 3: 15. "And Jesus answering, said unto him"—is also biblical: *wa-ya'an wa-yo'mer.* When the angel said (1: 20-21): " . . . Mary . . . shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people . . .", he was not talking Greek. "Call his name" (rather than "call him") is an idiom of the Hebrew Bible, and it is in Hebrew that the name corresponds to the reason for the name: Jesus is

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Yeshua' (in the English versions Jeshua, a later variant of Joshua), and "he shall save" is *yoshia'*. Compare Genesis 16: 11: "And the angel of the LORD said unto her [Hagar], . . . thou . . . shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard [*shama'*]. . . ."

Or consider some nonbiblical expressions and formulas. A good Greek compound, *oligopistoi* ("men of little faith," as in 6: 30), turns out to be rabbinic: "R. Eliezer the Great said, Anyone who has bread in his basket and asks, What shall I eat tomorrow?, is but of the men of little faith" (*mi-qeṭanne amanah*; Soṭah 48b). In 10: 13 "let your peace come upon it [the house]" is "say, *'Shalom 'alekhem,* peace (be) upon you,' to the people in the house." For 11: 26 RSV gives as the more literal rendering, in a note, "so it was well-pleasing before thee." That is still the liturgical Hebrew of the synagogue: with a change of tense and mood, *ken yehi raẓon* and *yehi raẓon mille-fanekha,* and even—though I think this is late—*ken yehi raẓon mille-fanekha.* In 12: 32 KJV's "this world . . . the world to come" and RSV's "this age . . . the age to come" are transparently *ha-'olam ha-zeh, ha-'olam ha-ba'*.

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"SCRIBES AND Pharisees, hypocrites!" is Matthew's special contribution to what has been called the teaching of contempt. It has cost us dearly. Yet even this is of Jewish origin; and not only Jewish, but actually Pharisaic. There is a famous story in Soṭah (22b) about Alexander Jannaeus, who killed thousands of Pharisees almost a century before Jesus was born: "Said King Jannaeus to his queen, Be afraid neither of the Pharisees nor of those who are not Pharisees, but of the hypocrites who seem like Pharisees. For their deeds are like the deed of Zimri, but they seek the reward of Phinehas." (The reference is to Numbers 25. Calling a Jew Zimri is something like calling a Christian Judas.)

Now I come to what may be—I am not sure—an original thought. It seems to me possible that Jesus (or Matthew's source) liked "hypocrite" so much because it was a pun, and punning was an accepted mode of scholarly-religious discourse among the Jews. Thus, the prayer book quotes from the tractate Megillah (28b): "It was taught in the school of Elijah: Whoever studies laws every day is assured of life in the world to come, as it is said (Habakkuk 3: 6): 'His ways are everlasting.' For 'ways,' *halikhot,* read 'laws,' *halakhot.*" This last almost seems to be debating by pun across the centuries. Though I have forgotten where, I remember reading some years ago that one of the Dead Sea writings was bitter about the *ish ha-ḥalaqot,* the man of smooth things, the man of flattery. Is there an attack here against the *ish ha-halakhot,* the man of the (novel, Pharisaic) laws?

"Hypocrities" is *ẓevu'in,* as in the statement attributed to Alexander Jannaeus. An honorific word associated with the Pharisees was *ẓenu'in,* "modest, retired, chaste"; or, in relation to such matters as tithes, "scrupulous, meticulous." In the Mishnah Demai (6: 6) we read, about a fine point of tithing, that "the more meticulous [*ẓenu'in*] of the school of Hillel used to observe the words of the school of Shammai." If there was one thing not calculated to impress Jesus and his followers, it was fussiness about tithes. Do the Pharisees like to be called *ẓenu'in,* modest, meticulous? Rather call them *ẓevu'in,* hypocrites—especially since they use the word themselves, for men who have the show but not the substance of Pharisaism.

* * * *

MATTHEW's references to the Hebrew Bible and quotations or paraphrases from it are abundant, if only because he causes so many prophecies to be "fulfilled": a common formula is "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (RSV, "to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet"). Almost always the quotations are apposite and show a good knowledge of the original—by heart, and thus sometimes not quite accurate in detail. The few I have compared with the Septuagint lead me to believe that Matthew need not rely on the existing Greek translation but can translate directly from the Hebrew. For instance, 7: 23 quotes Psalms 6: 9 (8), "Depart from me, all you workers of evil;" but where the Septuagint has *apostête* for "depart," Matthew has *apochōreite*; and Matthew, unlike the Septuagint, omits "all." He can also differ from the Septuagint when quoting from the Pentateuch, the first part of the Bible to be translated, whose Greek text was therefore more established than that of Psalms.

Besides quotations, Matthew has pseudo-quotations. A fine pseudo-quotation is in 27: 9-10, an alleged fulfillment of prophecy about the thirty pieces of silver, supposedly from the book of Jeremiah. In their notes Nestle and RSV give pride of place to Zechariah 11: 12-13, but even that does not quite fit. As for Jeremiah, the verses they suggest, hesitantly, are out of the question. In Nestle's critical apparatus we learn that some ancient manuscripts have Matthew quoting not Jeremiah but Zechariah; and some, Isaiah! It was an embarrassment from the beginning.

Finally, there is deliberate tendentiousness. From the Sermon on the Mount Christians have learned for centuries that a Jew is commanded to hate his enemies. In Nestle's edition typography shows up the tendentiousness—or rather, falseness—beautifully. Since Nestle uses bold type for New Testament quotations from the Hebrew Bible, 5: 43 would look like this if he were giving us Matthew in RSV's English: "You have heard that it was said, **'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemies.'** " Visibly, the first part is

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a quotation, the second is not. The margin refers us back to Leviticus 19: 18: " . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

* * * *

TO PARAPHRASE a saying of Jesus', it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a Christian translation of the New Testament to be entirely honest. Witness Matthew 1: 20-23 (RSV):

> . . . an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. . . ." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son. . . ."

Let us look closely at "virgin." The Revised Standard Version so renders Greek *hē parthenos* here, like the King James Version before it and even the New English Bible after it. The Hebrew word in Isaiah 7: 14, which the Septuagint translates as Matthew was to do later, is *ha-'almah*. Now KJV is at least consistent: its Isaiah also reads "virgin." Not so RSV's Isaiah, which, unlike its Matthew, reads "young woman"; but then, to make things even worse, it adds one of the most disgraceful notes I have ever seen in a scholarly enterprise: "or *virgin*." Disgraceful, because it has been many years since anyone has so understood *'almah*. Brown, Driver, and Briggs were Protestant clergymen as well as professors of Hebrew or Bible (at Union Theological Seminary and Oxford), and their *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, published in 1907, was only stating what had long been accepted by all scholars when it defined *'almah* as "young woman (ripe sexually; maid or newly married)."

Why did the Septuagint translate *'almah* as *parthenos* in the first place? Perhaps for the same reason that modern translators—including RSV!—refrain from translating *parthenos* as "virgin" in another part of Matthew. In Chapter 25 KJV's five foolish and five wise virgins are maidens for RSV, and in the New English Bible they are five foolish and five prudent girls. Hellenistic *parthenos* was no longer exclusively or necessarily "virgin." What had happened to this word in the course of time was something like what has happened to English "maid," but less than to German *Dirne*—"damsel" first becoming "wench" and then "strumpet." ("Wench" itself has a similar history.) So it used to be that a lover was a suitor, and his mistress the girl or woman he wanted to marry; while now, lover and mistress are—well, lover and mistress. When T. S. Eliot wrote a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* complaining about NEB's girls and asking for the return of the virgins, the scholars firmly put him in his place: *parthenos* in Hellenistic usage *might* be a virgin; she *was* a girl or young woman. Which did not prevent RSV and even NEB from translating *'almah-parthenos* in Matthew's Isaiah as "virgin."

A question to the scholars: Is "the young woman" the best rendering for *ha-'almah*? Perhaps it should be "the Crown Princess," wife of the heir apparent to the throne? *Ha-gevirah* means "the lady," but as a title it is "the Queen" or "the Queen Mother." (Monsieur and Mademoiselle were the styles of specified members of the French royal family.)

* * * *

Jews and Gentiles

For Jesus, the Gentiles (Greek *hoi ethnikoi, ta ethnē* = Hebrew *ha-goyim*) are to be avoided. What they do is bad; and if they do something good, that proves it is so to be taken for granted, is so much a mere human instinct, that no merit attaches to it. In 10: 5-6, he charges his disciples: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And in the Sermon on the Mount:

> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

(The tax collector—KJV's publican—was the lowest of the low, enriching himself while serving the voracious foreign oppressor.) A contradictory verse, 28: 19, is manifestly late and not Jesus' at all: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Anti-gentilism persists in a Christian *halakhah* that must have arisen to govern internal church discipline after Jesus, though it is attributed to him (18: 15-17): "If your brother sins against you . . . but . . . does not listen to you . . . [or to] two or three witnesses . . . [or] even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." The law is based on Deuteronomy 19: 15: ". . . only on the evidence of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained."

What then of "their synagogues," so frequent in Matthew? It may mean "the synagogues of those others, the Jews." Or it may mean "*their* synagogues"—the synagogues of those who do not follow Jesus, as opposed to *ours*, the synagogues of those who do follow him. So, in modern times, Hasidim and Mitnaggedim could say "their" about each other's synagogues.

Christianity's passage from the Jews to the Gentiles has left its clearest traces in the contradiction between the New Testament's account of Jesus' descent and its account of his birth. In the genealogical part Jesus is descended from David. Only a Jew would say this, and only to Jews. For them David was the great king, from whose line would come the Messiah: in the *Shemoneh-'esreh*

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Jews still pray (three times a day, most days), "Speedily cause the scion of David, Thy servant, to spring forth, and exalt his horn [strength, glory] by Thy salvation; for we await Thy salvation all the day. Blessed art Thou, etc." But what was David to the heathen? An obscure shepherd-chieftain who had once attained some local eminence, according to the Jews, in a minor outpost of the civilized world. The Davidic descent is by and for Jews.

That being so, the conception by the Holy Spirit must be Gentile; for how can Joseph transmit a descent from David if he is, emphatically, not Jesus' father but only the husband of his mother? In 22: 41-46 there is a would-be proof from Scripture (Ps. 110: 1) that the Messiah is not the scion of David. The proof is feeble, being obviously ignorant of the Hebrew. (Again RSV is shifty, translating the Hebrew as "The LORD says to my lord: Sit at my right hand . . ." but translating the Greek of Matthew as "The Lord said to my Lord. . . .") In any event, these verses have to come from a source other than the early one that gave Jesus a Davidic lineage.

* * * *

Law and Spirit

Not until I read Matthew closely did I see how literally Jesus is to be understood when he says, in the Sermon on the Mount (5: 18-19):

> . . . till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot [KJV: one jot or one tittle] will pass away from the law. . . . Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men to do so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

And in fact, Jesus is stricter than the Rabbis—except about tithes and levitical purity.

Do these verses give us the words of Jesus himself? If not his words, then his thought. They do not represent the ideology of a church that was becoming unobservant of the Torah ("law"). Such a church would have preferred to delete them. If it retained them, that could only be because they were universally known and universally attributed to Jesus.

Jesus is represented as not acting in accordance with his affirmation of the Torah in Chapter 12, where he justifies to the complaining Pharisees his disciples' plucking ears of grain on the Sabbath:

> . . . if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" [Hosea 6: 6], you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.

But this does not sound like Jesus. It sounds like Jewish followers of Jesus after his death, who are attributing the justification for their practice—a sectarian *halakhah*—to their master (but who do not dare to go so far as to say Jesus himself plucked ears of grain on the Sabbath). Later in the same chapter Jesus' defense of healing on the Sabbath, in opposition to the Pharisees, is also improbable.

We can be most sure of Jesus' conviction about something when he speaks in passing, by the way. Then the author or editor of Matthew, his attention concentrated on the main point, may fail to bring the incidental reference into line with his own purpose. Such a passage is 24: 15-21:

> When you see the desolating sacrilege . . . in the holy place . . . let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle. . . . Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation. . . .

He is saying, by the way and as a matter of course, that you should keep the Sabbath even at the cost of impeding a flight for your life. Holding that you might not violate the Sabbath to save your life, he could not have held that you might violate the Sabbath, by plucking grain, to allay your hunger at once; and he is unlikely to have held that you might violate the Sabbath by initiating a cure for a chronic illness (as opposed to a sudden or acute one).

In contrast, a *midrash* (Tanḥuma on Mas'e) teaches:

> One who is attacked by robbers may break the Sabbath in order to save his life. Once letters from the Roman government, containing evil tidings for the Jews, reached the elders of Sepphoris. They asked R. Eleazar ben Perata [about 90-135 C. E.] what to do. It was the Sabbath, and they said: "Shall we flee?" He . . . said: "Danger to life annuls the Sabbath, for man is to live by doing God's commandments, and not to die by them. . . ."

During the Maccabean wars, Jews had died unresisting on the Sabbath, until the Rabbis' predecessors ruled in the spirit of R. Eleazar three hundred years later. If this leniency had sunk into the people's consciousness, the elders of Sepphoris would not have had to ask him for a ruling. Jesus was closer to the conservative folk than to the Rabbis.

On the question of oaths Jesus seems to have a position midway between them. He agrees with the folk that an oath is an oath and that if a man means his utterance to be one, he should be bound by it, without regard to technicalities about oath-formulas. The Rabbis, who disapproved of oaths, sought by technicalities to narrow the range of utterances that were legally binding as such. In doing so, they left themselves open to Jesus' sarcasms (23: 16-22), with which the folk probably agreed:

> "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If any one swears by the temple, it is nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is

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bound by his oath.' You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? . . ."

He disagrees with the folk in reproving oaths: " . . . you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely. . . .' But I say to you, Do not swear at all. . . . Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No' . . ." (5: 33-37). "I" was saying this in agreement with the Rabbis, not in opposition to them. To this day a traditionally pious Jew has at least one thing in common with a pious Quaker: he will not take an oath. The late S. Z. Cheshin of the Israeli Supreme Court—he was once my teacher in a Talmud Torah here—tells in *Tears and Laughter in an Israel Courtroom* about plaintiffs and defendants who, rather than testify under oath, choose to lose lawsuits in which they are in the right.

* * * *

JESUS IS SAID to defend his disciples' failure to wash their hands before eating (15: 1-20). The defense has two parts, of which the better-remembered is this:

> Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus and said, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." . . . he called the people to him and said to them, ". . . not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." [And to the disciples,] "Do you not see that what goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and so passes on? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

This part by itself is complex enough. As with plucking ears of grain on the Sabbath, Jesus himself is not represented as doing what the Pharisees complain of, only as justifying his disciples' doing it. Again, this sounds like a rationalization of a sectarian *halakhah* of the early church, and we may doubt whether Jesus ever said it, at least in this form.

What is more, the argument shows an antinomian tendency, a contempt for law in the name of spirituality and morality, which must be even later. Note how cleverly it is done. Hand and mouth belong together: the hand brings food to the mouth. But here the mouth is made secondary, a mere entrance to the stomach—which is promptly forgotten—and an agent for the heart, and the relation between hand and mouth is transformed into a distinction between heart and mouth. That this is illegitimate we may see from the kinds of immorality that are made to issue from the mouth: not only false witness and slander, which are indeed oral, but also evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, and theft, which are not. (Nor need the stomach have been forgotten, since Jewish law condemns gluttony.) The inference is that people who worry about their ritual obligations are unconcerned about murder, etc. The argument is so massively disproportionate to the occasion—which is after all only a reproach that a tradition of the elders, not the Torah itself, is being ignored—that I can understand why I thought I remembered it as justifying something like eating forbidden meats. If Jesus had accepted the argument, he could never have said what he did about observing every jot and tittle of the law.

In actuality, those who are careful about the ritual washing of hands before meals sin less than others, not more, in murder, adultery, fornication, and theft, and perhaps in evil thoughts, too; while the logic of antinomianism—Paul himself later discovered this, to his dismay, and we learn it from the history of spiritualizing enthusiasms of all kinds—is that immorality tends to become as trivial as not washing the hands. Or rather, immorality tends to become either a higher good in itself or a necessary means to a higher good. Shabbethai Ẓevi's followers, for instance, had a doctrine of the good deed that comes by way of transgression.

What we can retain of this part of the story is that Jesus said to the Pharisees, more or less: "Why are you concerned about conveying ritual impurity to the mouth through neglect of washing the hands? Why are you not concerned about the moral impurities that issue from the mouth: false witness and slander?" Jesus could very well have said this—though in saying even so little he would have been rather less than fair. Perhaps because the Jews are a verbal people, and therefore particularly exposed to the temptation of sinful speech, the classical rabbinical literature and our liturgy—composed by men who took very seriously the washing of hands and the purity of what goes into the mouth—incessantly, and often in a most exaggerated fashion, denounce *leshon ha-ra'*, evil speech. So do medieval ethical wills, and a saintly rabbi who died as recently as 1933 was known not by his own name but, in accordance with the tradition, by the name of his great work the *Ḥafeẓ Ḥayyim* ("Who Desires Life"), subtitled "Laws Prohibiting Evil Speech [*leshon ha-ra'*] and Slander [*or* gossip; *rekhilut*] or Any Suggestion [*avaq*: dust] of Them." (Ps. 34: 13,14 [12,13]: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days,/that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil,/and thy lips from speaking guile.") Other works of his, with similar titles, taught the same lesson. The Ḥafeẓ Ḥayyim was ritually punctilious in a measure beyond our understanding, but his great life's work was against evil speech, gossip, and slander; while we antiritualists are not conspicuously free of those things.

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As a friend of mine puts it, we just call them character analysis.

* * * *

THE SECOND part of Jesus' argument about washing the hands (15: 3-5) has to do with the primacy of commandment over tradition:

> He answered them, "And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' . . . But you say, 'If any one tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honor his father [or his mother—Nestle].' So, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! . . ."

In the New Testament the Pharisees are straw men, easily knocked down. If they had had a fair hearing, they would have answered that to honor father and mother is not an absolute commandment. To honor God is a greater commandment, and clearly father and mother should not be honored by obedience if they order their children not to honor God, as by worshipping idols. Abraham did not, in this sense, honor his father, and the Psalmist had said (27: 10); "For my father and my mother have forsaken me,/but the LORD will take me up." The decision the Pharisees had made in the case Jesus cited was open to discussion, but the principle underlying it was one that he himself must accept. And, relying on the evidence of Matthew (8: 18-22, 10: 34-37, 12: 46-50), the Pharisees could have gone farther and turned Jesus' "hypocrite" against him:

> 1. Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And . . . [one] of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."
>
> 2. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother. . . . He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. . . ."
>
> 3. While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? . . . whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."

These hard sayings show something less than devotion to the commandment of honoring father and mother. Elijah, who in Christian typology is a forerunner of Jesus, was patient with a disciple whose filial duty was less urgent than burying a father (I Kings 19: 20-21): " . . . 'Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.' . . . Then he arose and went after Elijah. . . ." And Mary's son snubbing her and his brothers, letting them stand waiting outside while he discourses on the superiority of spiritual to fleshly kinship, is hardly edifying. Abraham is not shown behaving toward his idolatrous father Terah as Jesus behaves toward his mother Mary.

Any zealotry brings not peace but a sword, setting sons against fathers and daughters against mothers. We have seen politics do it, and Hasidism did it. But even for a zealot Jesus' behavior is unlovely.

JESUS' ANNOYANCE with the Pharisees over their insistence on washing hands is real. On either side, hygiene had nothing to do with the question. The Pharisees taught that since a man's hands inevitably touch impure things or things that have touched impure things, he must wash before meals so as not to transfer impurity from his hands to his food. For the Jewish peasantry, the *'am ha-arez*, tilling the soil and tending the flocks, it was hard to meet the Pharisees' elaborate requirements for avoiding transferred impurity, and they resented the Pharisees' refusal for that reason to eat with them or associate with them. They also resented the Pharisees' finickiness about produce: had it been certainly tithed properly?; was it fit to be eaten by a pious man? Just as Jesus expresses the *'am ha-arez*'s impatience with having to wash the hands of transferred impurity, so he expresses their impatience with a burdensome tithing code (23: 23):

> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin [=you worry whether even small herbs have had a tithe properly set aside], and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the other.

The last clause, so unsubversive of the Torah, recalls not only the jot-and-tittle injunction but also 23: 3: " . . . practice and observe whatever they [the Pharisees] tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice."

As distinguished from the Sadducees, the Pharisees were the popular party. The people supported them and accepted their leadership. This having been said, it must also be said that the Pharisees—and the Rabbis after them—alienated the peasant *'am ha-arez* by distance and contempt: for one disgusting expression of that contempt, see Pesaḥim 49b. That the *'am ha-arez* responded appropriately we learn from R. Akiba himself, who remembered the murderous hatred he had felt, when an unlettered young shepherd, for *talmide ḥakhamim*. As a champion of the *'am ha-arez* against their contemners the Pharisees, Jesus is attractive.

(In our time, when the first religious kibbutzim were being established, the founders had to ask a

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rabbinical authority about some difficult points of law: for instance, are cows to be milked on the Sabbath?; and if so, what is to be done with the milk? [Yes, because though milking is work, and Sabbath work is forbidden, yet a cow would suffer pain if not milked, and we are explicitly commanded to succor a distressed creature on the Sabbath. But the milk is to be poured out, because though we are forbidden to waste or destroy wantonly, the prohibition against profiting from Sabbath work removes the pouring from the category of wanton destruction.] Point after unusual point was raised with the rabbi, until finally he demanded: "You're good Jewish boys. Why can't you be storekeepers, like your fathers?")

* * * *

To SUM UP, the conflict between law and spirit, as we know it in Christianity from Paul to Luther, is not Jesus'. For him, as for Judaism always, the law was the protection of the spirit. Two final examples under this head:

1. " . . . when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do . . . that they may be praised by men. . . . But . . . let . . . your alms . . . be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (6: 2-4). He is talking about *mattan ba-seter,* "a gift in secret" (elevated in Jewish practice from its meaning in Proverbs 21: 14). Some Jews still practice it, in spite of the tax code and the ways of modern philanthropy, for the reason Jesus gave—so that their Father who sees in secret will reward them. After my grandfather's death, the family discovered he had been a secret giver.

2. As RSV's note suggests, "our daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer is rather "our bread for the morrow": *ton arton hēmōn ton epiousion.* The adjective *epiousios* comes from *epiousa,* "morrow," formerly the participle in *hē epiousa hēmera,* "the coming day, the following day." So the prayer is "Give us this day our bread for tomorrow." (Note the Jewish plurals: "our" Father, not "my" Father; give "us," not "me.") But R. Eliezer the Great said: "Anyone who has bread in his basket and asks, 'What shall I eat tomorrow?', is but of the men of little faith." Jesus is closer to R. Eliezer in saying (6: 31), " . . . do not be anxious, saying 'What shall we eat,' or 'What shall we drink,' or 'What shall we wear?' " than in instructing his followers to pray for the morrow's bread.

Was R. Eliezer, then, a man who exalted spirit over law? Not at all. Although of the school of Hillel, by temperament and outlook he seems closer to the school of Shammai. He was so inflexible and opposed to innovation, so insistent that nothing should be taught or instituted which had not been formally handed down from master to disciple, that his colleagues had to put him under the ban. They continued to respect him—he remains "the Great"—but in the crisis after the destruction of the Temple his ultra-conservatism was a danger. Nor was R. Eliezer a lover of the *minim,* the heretics, the Jewish Christians. Since he was the traditionalist he was, the doctrine he taught must have come to him from his masters, and from *their* masters before them—Pharisees of Jesus's time and earlier.

* * * *

The Gentle Carpenter

It was from elements of Renan's *Vie de Jésus* that the secularized, sentimental picture of a tender and "progressive" Jesus was drawn. Of all the strange pictures of him over the centuries, this is the strangest. In reality he is often violent in speech or action. And either he is unworldly—since the end is near, very near—or he is basically satisfied with things as they are.

Not once does he hold God to His justice—unlike Abraham (Genesis 18: 25: "Far be it from Thee to do such a thing . . . shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?") and Job and Jeremiah (12: 1: "Righteous art Thou, O LORD, when I complain to Thee;/yet would I plead my case before Thee") and Levi Isaac of Berdichev. Jesus likens God to a king or to a householder (*oikodespotēs*; perhaps better "owner of an estate") who behaves in an arbitrary, cruel, or grasping way; and then it is not the arbitrariness, cruelty, and greed that Jesus condemns, but their victims, cautioning us to avoid their fate. Four examples:

1. The parable of the king who wished to settle accounts with his servants (18: 23-35) ends as follows:

> "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have mercy on your fellow servants, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers [*basanistai;* RSV's note: "Greek *torturers*"; KJV, less euphemistic than RSV's text: tormentors], till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

Agreed; each of us should forgive his brother. But if we do not, should a just and merciful God hand us over to the torturers? And if Jesus were indeed gentle and compassionate, would he approve?

2. "For many are called, but few are chosen" (22: 14): first a king commands his servants to waylay travelers and to make them go as wedding guests to his palace, and then he casts one such guest into outer darkness for not wearing a wedding garment.

3. The wise maidens (NEB's prudent girls) are commended for a piece of selfishness like the morality of La Fontaine's ant—prudential, but hard to admire—and the bridegroom's rejection of the foolish girls, eager to be guests at the wedding, is not questioned (25: 1-13):

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> . . . the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise replied, "Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves." . . . Afterward the . . . [foolish] maidens came . . . saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." But he replied, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you."

4. In the parable of the talents (25: 14-30) the so-called slothful servant says: "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow." Which the master confirms by his reply: " . . . you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest." The moral is equally noble: " . . . to every one who has will more be given . . . but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away." The prophet Nathan was less complaisant, denouncing King David in the parable (II Samuel 12: 1-6) of the rich man who could not bring himself to butcher one of his many sheep, and instead took the poor man's one ewe lamb (Bathsheba).

BLESSED ARE the poor; but there is no need to get excited about them (26: 6-11):

> Now when Jesus was at Bethany . . . a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor." But Jesus . . . said to them, ". . . you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me."

His "you always have the poor with you" is quite different from its source, Deut. 15: 11: "For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land." Similarly, when Jesus counsels the rich young man to sell all he has and give to the poor (19: 21), he is concerned not with the poor but with the rich man's chances of going to heaven.

Christianity is never less able to rely on the New Testament, never more in need of the Old, than when it tries to do something about justice and mercy.

* * * *

THERE IS much that is arbitrary and willful in Jesus himself. We have the enigmatic 21: 18-19:

> . . . he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside he went to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

This may be another attempt to show that prophecy has been fulfilled, since tree, fruit, and leaves of the fig point to Jeremiah 8: 8-13:

> How can you say, "We are wise/and the law of the LORD is with us?"/. . . from the least to the greatest/every one is greedy for unjust gain;/from prophet to priest/every one deals falsely./They have healed the wound of my people lightly,/saying, "Peace, peace,"/when there is no peace./Were they ashamed when they committed abomination?/No, they were not at all ashamed;/they did not know how to blush. . . ./when I would gather them, says the LORD,/ there are no grapes on the vine,/nor figs on the fig tree;/even the leaves are withered. . . .

(This last verse, about grapes on the vine and figs on the tree, begins the ominous Prophetical lesson for the morning of the fast of the Ninth of Av.)

The author of Matthew seems puzzled about the meaning of the story he tells. He has the disciples asking, not why Jesus did what he did, but "How did the fig tree wither at once?", and he has Jesus answering that if they have undoubting faith they will be able to do more than wither fig trees, they will be able to command mountains to be cast into the sea. Whatever the meaning that has escaped Matthew, this story is small and peevish, especially when read beside the Jeremiah it echoes.

In general, the miracles in Matthew are frivolous. The things Moses does at the parting of the sea, Joshua at Jericho and Gibeon, Elijah at Mount Carmel—these are large and public, decisively affecting the people of Israel at crucial turning-points in their history, and mankind through them. But when Matthew has Jesus walking on the sea and encouraging Peter to walk on the sea, in Chapter 14, is that necessary? What would be different in the working out of God's plans for men if the miracle did not happen? What is Matthew's Jesus doing if not showing off? And so with the story told twice (in Chapters 14 and 15), with some statistical variations, about feeding the multitudes. As the disciples say, the crowds will not starve in the absence of a miracle; they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves. But he sees to it that the 5,000 (or 4,000) men, besides women and children, are amply fed with 5 (or 7) loaves and 2 (or a few small) fishes, and that 12 (or 7) baskets full of broken pieces are left over. A miracle unnecessary for the multitudes, unnecessary for the disciples, unnecessary for hallowing the Name and establishing the kingdom.

Finally, Jesus' character as a faith-healer and expeller of demons must be taken seriously. Much later Israel Ba'al Shem Tov was also a faith-healer, and exorcizing a *dybbuk* was no laughing matter for him and his contemporaries. How large and central a place the casting out of demons and healing occupy in Matthew—this I did not realize, again, until I read slowly.

* * * *

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Judeo-Christian

A friend once told me that if I wanted to get an idea of Jesus and his disciples, and what they were with each other, I should observe Hasidim in Jerusalem or Brooklyn and try to reconstruct what Hasidism had been in its glory. And indeed there are many similarities between early Christianity and Hasidism: faith-healing and exorcism; the momentary expectation of wondrous things; tales of the master's miracles; the elevation of the master's *logia* and behavior to the rank of Torah; superiority of master to father; vying for place among the disciples; the sacred meal of master and (male) disciples, with the master giving them bread; appeal to a folk accustomed to suffering the scorn of the learned; observing the law, but in a manner irritating to the authorities (as in the Hasidim's way with the time of prayer and with sectarian slaughtering)—and more. There is even the possibility, in some branches of Hasidism, of an esoteric doctrine of the master as Messiah.

I do not believe in a timeless mentality or character, but it is hard not to believe that something immanent in Judaism brings forth such movements and enthusiasms from time to time. Besides Hasidism as a parallel to early Jewish Christianity (or Christian Judaism), we have had Shabbethai Ẓevi and his teachings and followers; and who knows how many other sectarianisms of like nature remain buried under the sand of the Jewish past.

Matthew is not all of the New Testament, as the New Testament is not all of Christianity, but Matthew by itself is enough to persuade me that speaking of a Judeo-Christian tradition is different from speaking of a Slavic-Patagonian tradition. Christianity grew away from Judaism, and no Jew can believe that that was for the best. But it did not grow away altogether, and a desire on the Christian side to speak of the Judeo-Christian tradition must mean, among other things, a desire rather to return closer than to depart farther.

Why, then, is the talk about the tradition so recent? When men perceived only Christians and Jews (so many of them, so few of us), they saw the differences. Now we live in a perceived world that is mostly neither Christian nor Jewish—not so much that it is secular as that it is non-Western. Becoming aware, in that world, of a nearness formerly not thought of, we begin to speak of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

There is nothing unusual about social realities influencing the way men think about religion. Because Byzantium had its kind of emperor, it thought of Jesus as Pantocrator; and the Jews' vision of hell, as Saul Lieberman has demonstrated, reproduced the particular kinds of torture they experienced at the hands of their Gentile rulers. The distance between Judaism and Christianity led to distance between Jews and Christians, but it is also true that the distance between Jews and Christians led them to want to believe that Judaism and Christianity were distant. Now, naturally, men ask themselves whether the religions are truly alien from each other totally. Social circumstance suggests the question, it does not provide the answer. Theology and historical scholarship can alone do that. But that raising this religious and historical question is due to the situation of Jews and Christians in the Western world today, or even in America primarily—what is so sinister or discreditable about that?

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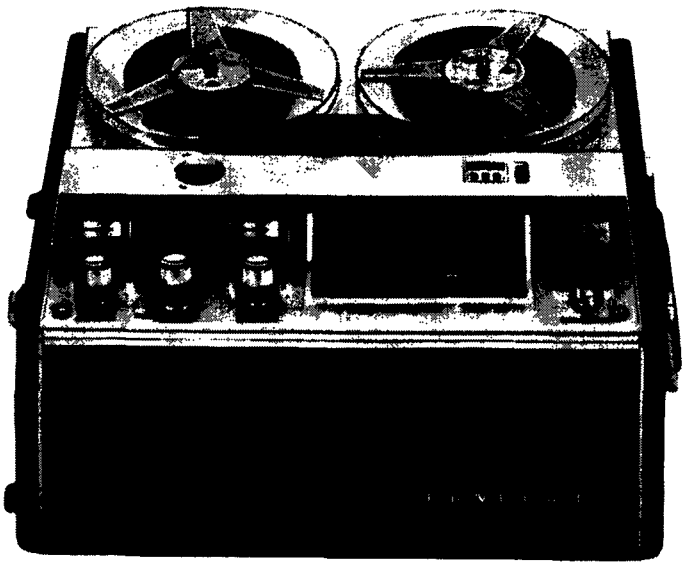

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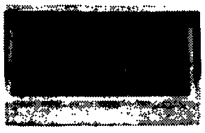

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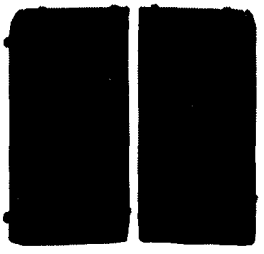

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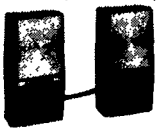

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CONSENSUS TELEVISION

Neil Compton

SUMMER WAS NOT the ideal season in which to begin a stint as a television critic. The channels were cluttered with re-runs or dreadful summer replacements. Walter Cronkite and Peter Jennings had slipped their anchors, and appeared only occasionally in film clips, familiar and reassuring figures among the exotic horrors of the world's hot spots. At any time, one was braced to switch on the set and discover that Huntley and/or Brinkley were no longer there to cushion the day's violence with their customary imperturbability.

Nevertheless, in this limbo between the grotesques and witches of 1964-65, and the secret agents who will apparently dominate the networks in 1965-66, there was time not only to unravel the tangled socio-sexual relationships of Peyton Place's homogenized citizenry (surely nobody will ever again dare to sneer at the intellectual limitations of an audience capable of coping with complexity of this order), but also to get the feel of American television generally.

I do my viewing from north of the Canadian border, where the fallout from American media is often considered to be slightly more vexing if less lethal than Strontium-90. About 40 per cent of the programs broadcast on the publicly owned CBC are American, and most Canadians switch occasionally to American channels to watch baseball games, spectaculars, or movies which are not being shown in Canada. But few Canadians with any intellectual pretensions watch U.S. television regularly: it is fashionable to scorn the hard-selling vulgarity of the American networks and to support our own good, gray CBC, even while constantly grumbling about it. Therefore, there seems something faintly disloyal about my accepting an invitation to serve as COMMENTARY'S TV critic: as I huddle over the flickering tube watching its shifting and distorted images of life across the border, I feel as though I inhabit the same kind of morally ambiguous and socially disembodied universe as a secret agent in a book by Graham Greene or John Le Carré.

If it does not intoxicate, sudden immersion in 100-proof American television is likely to leave the viewer with two strong impressions: first, the great networks seem to express a massive political consensus; second, they are commercial to a degree which even an outsider used to television advertising finds overwhelming. The two phenomena are not, of course, unrelated.

THE CONSENSUS reveals itself most dramatically on the subject of Vietnam. Since the war began to escalate, there has been an agitated world-wide debate on the wisdom of American policy in that unfortunate corner of the globe. During the past few months, Canadian television has presented a number of documentaries, panel discussions, and brief commentaries in which the complexities of the situation have been set out and discussed from a variety of points of view. Nowhere has the argument been more fiercely and frankly carried on than in American magazines and newspapers. But anyone who relied upon NBC, ABC, and CBS television would have been far less well informed than his Canadian counterpart even though the total time devoted to Vietnam on American networks was undoubtedly greater.

News bulletins about battles, air-raids, or government shake-ups are brilliantly and, on the whole, honestly handled on all three networks. There have been some spectacular battle reports (one thinks of Morley Safer's agonizing account on CBS of the destruction of a village for harboring the Viet Cong) and few attempts to pretty up the face of war. But the daily news broadcasts are singularly lacking in depth. They present events as though they occurred in a vacuum. When comment is necessary, viewers are treated to variations of the official line; they are subjected to propaganda that only occasionally rises above the level represented by a brigadier general (interviewed on CBS) who called the Viet Cong cowardly because they fight and run by night; and they are insulated from the reality of world opinion by repeated assurances that anti-war demonstrators in London are "leftists" or "left-wing led" (NBC).

The objection to this manner of presenting the news is not that it is one-sided—it is hard to imagine any great national communications medium being entirely neutral about a war to which both government and people are so strongly committed—but that it fails to relate events to the political and social complex of which they are a part, and therefore deprives the audience of the means to understand what is happening and thus to form valid opinions of its own. Incidentally, viewers who wondered what the rioting was about in Algiers and Athens this summer would have found the networks even less enlightening than about Vietnam.

OF COURSE, the networks supplement their regular news programs with occasional public-affairs specials. CBS in particular devoted five full hours of *CBS Reports* to the Vietnam situation between mid-June and mid-September. Of these the only one that came close to developing any kind of controversy was "Vietnam Dialogue: Mr. Bundy and the Professors" (Producer: Bill Small) on June 21. All the same, it was a disappointment to anyone wishing to see a real intellectual confrontation. It is simply impossible for six men profitably to discuss several aspects of a complicated subject during the course of a single hour—even if the audience were as intelligent and well-informed as the participants themselves. The moderator, Eric Sevareid, had to introduce a new topic each time the debate began to catch fire. As so often happens on television, the program resolved itself into a battle not so much of ideas as of life styles: the chief interest was to observe the contrast between

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the icily efficient and puritanical American Gothic of McGeorge Bundy and the worldly, slightly cynical European rationalism of Hans Morgenthau. Fascinating, but not very helpful.

"Vietnam Perspective," a series of four hour-long programs broadcast on CBS between August 9 and September 6, was hardly more successful. The first two programs made no real attempt to put the war in any perspective other than the oversimplifications of official handouts. Messrs. Rusk and McNamara, and Generals Maxwell Taylor and Earle G. Wheeler had little trouble in parrying the gently probing questions of Peter Kalischer, Harry Reasoner, and Walter Cronkite. The third program, on "Winning the Peace," in which Rusk, Bundy, and Arthur Goldberg faced Reasoner, Marvin Kalb, and Richard Hottelet, came to life occasionally when Kalb persisted in asking searching questions, to which he received the same fly-blown dusty answers we had heard on the two previous programs. Mr. Bundy delivered several brilliant lectures in which the words "prudence and restraint" recurred—a phrase contrasting oddly with the fearsome and horrific scenes we were to see in color on "One Day of War," the last program in the series. After watching the discussion, I switched back to the CBC television news in time to hear a short commentary by Mark Gayn of the Toronto *Star*, just back from two months in China and Vietnam. Could it be that he, and Rusk, Bundy, and Goldberg were really talking about the same war?

According to NBC News, it has twenty-two men covering Vietnam, and has devoted incredible amounts of expensive television time to reporting and commenting on the war. Be that as it may, NBC lagged behind even the mediocre CBS effort when it came to frank discussion of the issues. An opportunity to redeem this record was provided by the network's super-colossal three-and-one-half-hour public-affairs special, "American White Paper: United States Foreign Policy" (Producer: Fred Freed), broadcast on September 7. But this was no adequate successor to the three-hour special on civil rights which won NBC such honor in 1963. The network's far-flung correspondents must have found it depressing to see their work ruthlessly edited into bite-size snippets by a megalomaniac film editor: what was left on the cutting room floor might have made a more rewarding program. Insofar as anything meaningful emerged from the welter, it was an uncritical justification of every major element of American policy since 1945, occasionally punctuated as a gesture toward objectivity by very short rude noises from dissident critics.

All through the summer, ABC seemed to be neglecting public affairs, and raking in the profits from serials and re-runs, but on August 31 it came up with "The Agony of Vietnam" (produced and written by Stephen Fleischman), a moving hour-long special which combined brilliant reporting with sophisticated political and social analysis. At one point, the commentator remarked that we cannot afford to see Vietnam only through American eyes. Alone among the programs I have watched, this one gave Americans the opportunity to see the war through the eyes of others.

The apolitical, undialectical attitude of U.S. networks toward the news extends beyond the touchier aspects of foreign policy. The fight for civil rights is now part of the consensus, so the subject takes second place only to Vietnam in the amount of time devoted to it and the degree of commitment expressed: Southern politicians and police chiefs apparently vie for the privilege of making fools or villains of themselves on television, thus adding to the overwhelming national agreement on this one question to which there cannot be two valid sides. But there are other, less admirable examples of the tendency.

During the month of July, for instance, the networks gave us a glimpse of three Senate committee chairmen haranguing witnesses who had either failed to answer questions or given answers that the chairman did not like. Among the victims were the editor of a rifle magazine (for opposing reform of the gun-licensing laws), an official of the Internal Revenue Department (for alleged wire-tapping), and an officer of the Teamsters

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Union (for pleading the Fifth Amendment with respect to evidence about the alleged misappropriation of union funds). No doubt each of these individuals deserved what he got (my own sympathies are somewhat unevenly distributed among them), but the cause of democracy might have been better served if they had been able to defend themselves before the cameras under circumstances less unfavorable.

IN A self-congratulatory series of articles on *Broadcasting and the News* (first published in *Harper's* and now issued as a small book by NBC), the President of NBC, Robert E. Kintner, suggests that intense competition among the three networks, though possibly tending to debase standards of entertainment, has had nothing but good consequences so far as news and public affairs are concerned. There is truth in this, and he has a right to be proud of the superb organizations which the networks have built up to bring news to the people. The public is right to trust the accuracy of television over that of newspapers in general (as Elmo Roper has shown they overwhelmingly do). No doubt the networks would have been content to rely far more heavily on regular agency services if they had not been striving so hard to outdo one another in the news field.

However, competition for accuracy and breadth of coverage is one thing; competition for the largest audience is another. During the past five or six years we have seen the television news on all three networks become personalized, packaged, and merchandised, and competing for high ratings as though it were a quiz show or a situation comedy (though, being only the news, much further down the Nielsen scale). All the stock devices of the TV huckster—the "tease," the gargantuan rear projection screen, the film clips of violence—are used to hook the viewer, but, as we have seen, there is no depth to the presentation. The full talents of the network staffs are properly exploited only when some great occasion or national emergency disrupts the normal schedule. Needless to say, audience-conscious news programs will avoid, where possible, items which might offend or upset viewers.

On July 12, *CBS Reports* took an astonishingly frank and unbiased look at the system which has helped to create this state of affairs, on "The Rating Game" (produced and written by Joseph Wershba). This program gave a full account of the incredible mountain of demographical study, electronic gadgetry, and pseudo-scientific speculation that has to labor in order to bring forth the mouse of a Nielsen or Arbitron rating. There was a good deal of discussion about whether the ratings are accurate. Most people seem to think they are accurate enough: real controversy ought to center on the question of what exactly they measure (more on this later). The Chairman of the FCC confessed ruefully that he thinks ratings exercise a greater influence on broadcasters than he does. To the President of CBS Television, this is just a matter of "cultural democracy," which must be a comforting thought for him. Steve Allen and Rod Serling proved that dreams may flourish in even the most workaday world by recommending that broadcasters pursue excellence without regard to ratings; and Louis Harris testified that television is beginning to lose affluent viewers and gain poorer ones, and that it seems to be losing the young and gaining the old. During this excellent program, the current Nielsen ratings kept rolling across the screen. It seemed a pity that *CBS Reports* itself rated a low 10.8—a mere five million-odd families—on the index. (Amusingly enough, the rating for this particular program soared to a spectacular 20.8 in competition with *Alfred Hitchcock*, 15.8, and *Ben Casey*, 11.3. But it was no miracle—only a few of Nielsen's eleven-hundred-odd audimetered families switching from their regular channels to watch this program about themselves and their influence. Is there a lesson in statistics to be learned here?)

The Nielsen rating is, no doubt, a useful piece of information, but all it really proves is that a certain percentage of American households find a particular program tolerable at a particular time of the day and week. Restricting programs shown during prime viewing time to those that are merely tolerable to the greatest number of people, and devoting enormous resources of time, energy, and talent to devising programs which are tolerable to even more people than those offered by one's rival at the same hour is not "giving the public what it wants" (the phrase most often used to justify this profitable brand of "cultural democracy"). "What the public wants and what it has the right to get," wrote the Pilkington Commissioners investigating British broadcasting in 1960, "is the freedom to choose from the widest possible range of program matter. Anything less than that is deprivation." By this standard the combined resources of ABC, NBC and CBS add up to a rather expensive deprivation.

However, this column is supposed to be critical rather than polemical—though generations of radio and television critics have demonstrated the practical impossibility of avoiding both modes when writing of the commercial media. Those who would enjoy reading a detailed and unanswerable critique of the whole structure of American broadcasting should get a recently published book, *Television and Society* by Harry J. Skornia.*

MOST READERS will be surprised by Professor Skornia's revelations about the small, almost incestuous oligarchies which control the networks and the firms which manufacture transmitting and receiving equipment; he analyzes the "hidden economics" of broadcasting, revealing that the true rate of profit is higher than even my heated imaginings would have placed it; he summarizes a good deal of valuable information about the various rating systems and the way in which broadcasters manage to evade even the mild and permissive regulations of the FCC. He makes a number of suggestions for reform, of which the most important is the establishment of a publicly owned, non-profit radio and television service to provide the existing commercial systems with competition on

*McGraw-Hill, 268 pp., $7.50.

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some other level than the purely economic. The United States is the only important nation in the civilized world which lacks such a cultural resource, and I cannot think of a single valid agrument against it. I wish I could believe that the proposal will ever be taken seriously. Not that even this radical and un-American step would solve the basic problems of American broadcasting. Only a decline in the power of the advertising industry would pave the way for that.

Mr. Skornia's earnest manner and academic prose style sometimes seem out of place in a work devoted mainly to the cool world of popular television. Most of his professional life has been devoted to the theory and practice of educational TV, and this may account for the fact that his book is more effective in demonstrating the deficiencies of the present state of affairs than it is in imagining a more satisfactory system. ETV has great and still undeveloped potentialities, but it is not the sole nor even the chief alternative to commercial broadcasting.

I hazard a guess (though perhaps I'm doing him an injustice) that Mr. Skornia might have shared the sentiments of those members of Congress who objected so violently to *It's What's Happening, Baby* (CBS-TV, June 28; Producer-director: Barry Shear), the ninety-minute special on which a score of popular recording groups and their teenage admirers gave those adults who saw it and could stand the noise, a vivid if sometimes alarming glimpse of the ecstatic narcissism of urban adolescent culture (the program was a public-service feature aimed at school dropouts on behalf of the Office of Economic Opportunity). As a conservative jazz fan, I have a very limited appetite for rock-'n'-roll, and the less I see of Murray the K, the disc jockey who presided over the show, the happier I shall be. But there were moments of real excitement—visual and musical—during the course of the program, much of which was shot on location in streets and parks; and three or four of the singers (including the great but corrupted Ray Charles) showed that the traditions of Broonzy and Turner are not

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dead yet—not quite. One wishes that the proportion had been higher, but there was still more authentic feeling in this one program than in whole seasonsful of *Munsters, Gomer Pyles,* or *Bewitcheds.* Strange that the Senators should have singled it out for attack.

But, of course, it is not strange. The networks have so brainwashed viewers into accepting their version of the upper-middle-class, non-denominational suburban family of television serials as the reality of life in America, that any departure from the stereotype is regarded as libelous or subversive. Of course, no one believes in the myth more fervently than those who help to perpetrate it. Mr. Kintner tells us piously that "In America, by and large, private ownership [of broadcasting] feeds back what is already there." Hasn't the man read *Only You, Dick Daring*?

Whatever is "already there" in America, it is, we hope, more diverse and complicated than the image that generally appears on television screens. There are people who believe that to try to make distinctions between the slightly repellent vitality of a Ray Charles and the inoffensive nullity of a situation comedy such as *Bewitched* is a waste of time. Aren't they both products of a debased and commercialized culture? The answer is yes, but with a difference. The one retains some relationship to a rich popular musical tradition; the other is without roots in anything deeper than a Madison Avenue calculation of what blend of sex and silliness will sell for a season or two.

The distinction is between the products of popular culture, where individual style and authenticity of feeling is possible, and those of mass culture, where all human experience is processed into mechanical formulae—particularly patterns of consumption. In comparison with high culture, popular art may seem stereotyped, repetitive, and conformist; but in comparison with the mass-produced majority of television programs, it is life against death.

In future articles I shall try to make more elaborate discriminations between the various types of television fare. In the meantime there is just space to recommend *The Popular Arts,* by Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel*, in which two British critics make a noble effort to survey the whole complex field of British and American pop culture in a book which is aimed at both general readers and teachers. The authors' main argument is that it's time for those concerned with education to stop treating popular culture with snobbish and defensive disdain, and, literally, to get with it if they want to defend imaginative vitality against the inroads of mass commercialism. There are excellent illustrations, an annotated bibliography, and suggested classroom projects and exercises.

NEIL COMPTON, *who teaches English at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, here begins his quarterly appraisals of American television. His* "Television and Canadian Culture" *appeared in our November 1964 issue.*

* * *

THE SECRET†

Isaac Bashevis Singer

SOME ODD DIVORCES were granted in our house, but the one I'm about to describe was the oddest of all. One day the front door opened to admit the owner of a haberdashery and dry goods store located in the neighborhood. He was about forty and had a beard so black it looked almost blue. His eyes were not shifty or cunning but instead seemed to be gazing into the distance. I have since met Italians and Spaniards, who had the same dark eyes. He was dressed like a Hasid, but an exceptionally neat one. Everything he wore glistened—his alpaca *kapote*, his cloth hat, his soft collar with the black, silk tie. His name was Mordecai Meir.

"Good morning, rabbi."

"Good morning, Reb Mordecai Meir. Welcome. Please be seated. What can I do for you?"

Mordecai Meir uttered something akin to a grunt. "I want a divorce now."

"So?"

"Rabbi, I'm not doing this for frivolous reasons."

"What is wrong, then?"

"Rabbi, I'm very ill," he said calmly. "The doctors have given me up. We don't have any children; when I'm gone my wife will have to be released from a levirate marriage.** My only brother lives in America. So it's better to get a divorce now."

"What is wrong with you?"

The man whispered something to my father, who paled.

"The doctors are sometimes mistaken," he said after a moment. "It's all a matter of Providence."

"I'm not a *Kohen* [priest]. If I live, we can always remarry."

"I see. But what is your hurry?"

"Why wait?"

"Why not? You should consult someone else. Perhaps a specialist. There are some wonderful doctors in Vienna."

"I know. I've seen them already."

Father suddenly noticed me. "Out!" I went to another room, upset and frightened by the words I had overheard from this man who sold us thread, buttons, and other such items. I knew what the problem was: the wife of a Jew who has died childless must be released from a levirate marriage. Mordecai Meir was willing to divorce his wife and live out the final months of his life alone to spare his wife the hardship of being forced to have dealings with her brother-in-law. But how could a man speak so calmly of such matters? Tears came to my eyes, and I feared this man, who seemed to me now almost a walking corpse.

Mordecai Meir soon left the house. My father took my mother aside and told her what had happened. Hearing their whispers and sighs, I went outside and walked past Mordecai Meir's store. I wondered about his wife. Was she crying? Not at all. She stood behind the counter measuring a length of sacking with a wooden rule. As she went about her work, she smiled and talked with the customer. Dark like her husband, with a rounded figure, plump cheeks, and a high bosom, she still kept the customary amiability and decorum of a shopkeeper and matron. Her face show-

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* Pantheon, 380 pp., $7.95.

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** A law obliging the brother of a man who died leaving a widow but no children to marry the widow.—ED.

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ed not the slightest trace of concern. With great deliberation she counted the money she had just received and placed it in the cash drawer. "But this is impossible," I said to myself. "After all, it's her husband. She must know that he's going to die."

It was very odd; I, a stranger, was suffering while she, his wife, appeared unmoved. Later in life I was to have this same experience many times: to lose sleep over people that I hardly knew, though their closest relatives remained indifferent. I learned for the first time that there are people so stolid that no misfortune can affect them. They trudge on toward the grave, their minds on food and the trifles of the day. Even when they must look directly into death, they remain preoccupied by the pettiest ambitions.

But to return to Mordecai Meir. From that time on, I became more and more curious about him and his wife. At every opportunity I strolled past their store. And just like his wife, he continued to chat with customers, to display and sell his goods as usual, to count the day's receipts, or work on his accounts. But as he went about his business, he sometimes stared off into the distance as if he could see beyond the houses, across the roofs, and over the clouds. As the weeks passed, his face grew pale and then green, as though he had undertaken a long fast; his pallor made his beard seem even blacker.

Then one day in our house the divorce was granted. The scribe wrote out the terms with his quill pen. The two witnesses practiced their signatures. Mordecai Meir faced the scribe; his wife sat on a bench. A single tear fell from her eye and lingered on her cheek. The look on her face expressed the acquiescence of a simple woman who is dealing with matters beyond her comprehension. She knew how to sell thread, buttons, safety pins, how to handle a maid and clean house, but how to behave to a husband who was about to die bewildered her. I saw that her mind was wandering, and for a time she seemed to be counting the fringes on her shawl. Then suddenly she turned and twisted her wedding ring. Father sat leafing through a holy volume. He bowed his head and covered his eyes with his hand. Not for one moment did he doubt that what was happening had been ordained by Providence; but why had Providence denied Mordecai Meir his full complement of years? He was, after all, a decent fellow. Yet who dared question the ways of the Almighty?

Finally, Mordecai Meir's wife stretched out her hands and was given the bill of divorcement. Only then did she begin to wail. Father said what he always did on such occasions: the divorced woman could not remarry for ninety days. This caused a fresh rush of tears.

What subsequent arrangements were made by Mordecai Meir and his wife I do not know. According to the law they were not permitted to sleep under the same roof. I forgot about them or, rather, forced myself to forget.

ONE DAY I saw a procession. It was Mordecai Meir's funeral cortège. His widow walked with uplifted arms, weeping and moaning. Behind her came a number of men, who were chatting as they walked. Their manner seemed to say: "Mordecai Meir is Mordecai Meir, and we are we. He's a corpse, but we're alive. He's about to be buried, but we must pay our rent and our children's tuition. We no longer have anything in common."

Perhaps six or nine months later, I entered Mordecai Meir's store to buy thread, and found a strange man there. How different he was from Mordecai Meir. Mordecai Meir had been slim and delicate while this man was burly, with a large head, a flat nose, and a wide, thick beard. Hair sprouted from his long ears and wide nostrils; a little beard grew from every finger. He spoke in a rattling voice. His unbuttoned *kapote* was spotted. It was the second husband. He had taken over everything: Mordecai Meir's wife, his home, his store. He opened the cash drawer and casually took out a handful of coins, shuffled over the account books and papers, addressed his wife as though they had been married for years. It was as if there had never been such a person as Mordecai Meir.

In time, Mordecai Meir's wife had a child which was just as husky and slovenly as its father. She played with the baby, she clucked and cooed: "A-cuckoo, cuckoo."

THAT IS NOT quite the end of the story. During the First World War an epidemic of typhus ravaged Warsaw. More people died on Krochmalna Street than in any other section of the city. Among those who were taken was Mordecai Meir's widow. A neighbor lamented to my mother: "Such a young person, a mother of small children, and as lovely as a rose. Woe is us."

Mother, her matron's wig askew, nodded at this new episode in the timeless catastrophe to which one never becomes accustomed. It was only additional proof to her that life was a dream and it was useless to sin against one's Maker. Perhaps one should never have been born. . . .

But what was one to do if one was born?

A few months passed and in Mordecai Meir's store a strange woman could be seen.

This memoir is from ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER'S In My Father's Court, *to be published in 1966 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. The translator is* CHANA KLEINERMAN.

* * *

AN ANATOMY OF THE KLAN

Seymour Martin Lipset

THE LARGEST and most successful radical rightist organizations in American history—those which use extremist tactics in an effort to restore the privileges of declining social strata—have been the groups which have operated under the name, Ku Klux Klan. The first Klan, formed the day before Christmas in 1865, played a major role in restoring white supremacy to the South by intimidating the freed Negro slaves and their white supporters. The second, founded in 1915, is credited by most authorities with securing six million members at its high point in 1923-24, and with influencing or controlling the election of governors, legislators, and Congressmen in many states, Southern and non-Southern

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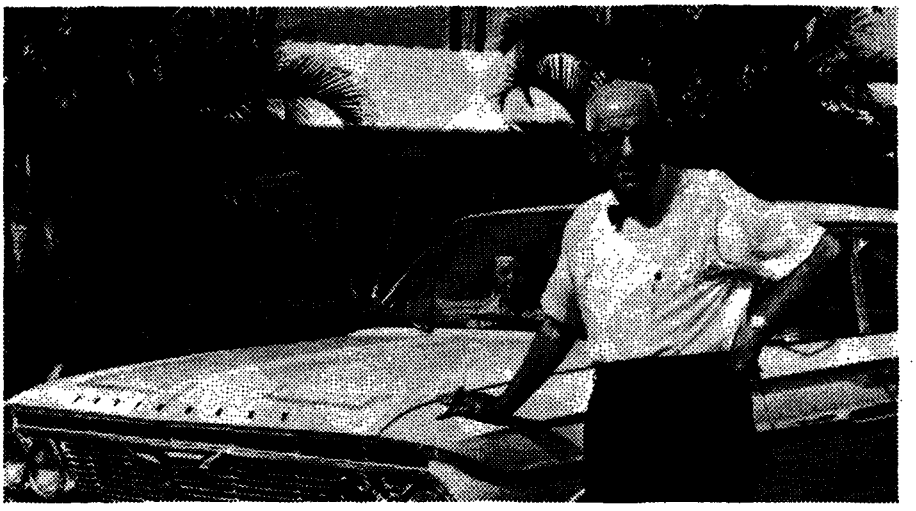

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alike. The third Klan—or more accurately, set of Klans—formed since World War II, has not had the success of its predecessors, in part because of better-financed competition from other groups on the Right, but it does play a role in many Southern towns today. The various Klans, then, clearly constitute an important American political phenomenon, yet little is known about them and their supporters. The comparatively minuscule American Communist party has inspired many more scholarly efforts.

The fact that 1965 is the centennial year of the original Ku Klux Klan seems to have resulted in a new burst of writing. Three books have appeared in rapid succession, dealing with different aspects of the history of the various Klans.* Two of them, those by David Chalmers and William Randel, purport in their titles to cover the entire century. In fact, however, three-quarters of the Randel volume is devoted to the first Klan, while the Chalmers study deals almost entirely with the second one. The third book by Charles Alexander reports in depth on the second Klan in four Southwestern states. Although Chalmers and Alexander also deal with the "third" Klan (the national organization of the second was formally dissolved in 1944), their treatment is somewhat cursory.

These three books contain much information, but they fail to unearth the data which would enable us to understand how six million people came to join an organization (the second Klan) in which men dressed up in bedsheets to frighten or even beat up other Americans. Who were these six million?

The first Klan which emerged after the Civil War is relatively easy to understand, although Professor Randel has unfortunately not written a good book about it, being more concerned to discredit that Klan and its latter-day apologists than to shed new light on its operation. Basically, the first Klan was a conspiracy of the leadership of the white South to destroy the political power of the freed Negro slaves, the Republicans, and the various groups of Northern whites who sought to improve the situation of the Negro. It succeeded in its task, intimidating many of the illiterate former slaves and frightening many of the whites who sought to help the Negro. Having finished that job, it dissolved. The "best elements" did not want to encourage lawlessness, once "law and order" had been restored.

THE FACT THAT it was necessary for the first Klan to come into existence should be regarded as an inverse tribute to the real efforts of many whites to change the Southern social structure after the Civil War. A genuine attempt was made to educate the freedmen, to give them the vote, to make them the base of a popularly-elected government. No such efforts were made in other former slaveholding societies, like Brazil or the British West Indies, which is one of the reasons why greater racial tensions and violence developed in the United States. In Brazil, for example, slaves were finally freed in 1888; they were not, however, given the vote, education, or economic assistance. The suffrage in Brazil, as in many other racially heterogeneous Latin American nations, has remained restricted to literates —a requirement which still serves to bar half of Brazil's total population, and close to 90 per cent of its Negroes, from the polls. Where the "inferior" race is held down by its depressed environment, where little is done to change such conditions, there is no need for a Ku Klux Klan, or overt racism. In the United States, as soon as the Northern Republicans dropped their support of the Negro and acquiesced in the restored rule of the Southern Bourbons, the Klan disappeared. (New and equally successful efforts to repress the Southern Negro re-emerged politically in the 1890's when the Populists attempted to appeal to Negroes.)

The first Klan was given an honored place in the mythology of the South in novels and histories written between the time of its dis-

*Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan: 1865 to the Present, by David Chalmers, Doubleday, 420 pp., $5.95; The Ku Klux Klan: A Century of Infamy, by William Pierce Randel, Chilton Books, 300 pp., $5.95; and Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest by Charles Alexander, 1360 pp., $6.50.

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solution and World War I. And the rise of the second Klan is in part a consequence of the influence of the mass media of the 20th century. There is general agreement that D. W. Griffith's motion picture, *The Birth of a Nation,* which appeared in 1915 and glorified the deeds of the early Klan, played a major role in preparing the way for, and perhaps even suggesting, revival of the organization. The KKK was reborn in 1915 as a fraternal order emphasizing "100 per cent Americanism and the supremacy of the Caucasian race."

Following U.S. entry into the war, the Klan turned into a private secret service group spying on radicals and others of dubious patriotism. Afterward it broadened its scope and emerged as a general vigilante organization seeking to repress groups and activities which failed to fit in with its concept of 100 per cent Americanism—Negroes, Jews, Catholics, Orientals, foreigners, and those who violated traditional morality through their behavior on the Sabbath, extramarital sex, drinking, etc.

Although the Klan recruited thousands of members during the war, its real period of growth dates from 1920, when its public relations and recruitment activities were taken over by two professional publicists, Edward Young Clarke and Mrs. Elizabeth Tyler. They found that "the minute we said 'Ku Klux,' editors from all over the United States began literally pressing us for publicity." One year later, the Klan could boast of 100,000 members, mainly in the South. It was led into its next spurt of massive growth by critical publicity. The New York *World* ran a continuing exposé of the activities of the Klan in September and October 1921, which was syndicated to papers in eighteen cities across the country. The description of Klan financial manipulations and illegal violence, far from hurting it, resulted in fantastic growth in all sections of the country.

THUS FAR, the story of the two Klans is clear. From here on out, however, we are in an area of speculation and doubt. Why did the Klan grow as rapidly as it did between 1920 and 1924? Who exactly

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were its supporters? What was its principal source of attraction—its racial bigotry? white supremacy? anti-Catholicism? anti-Semitism? Or were its members primarily concerned with repressing immorality, sexual freedom, license of any kind? Was the Klan wholly "rightist," or did it appeal to discontents of varying ideological persuasions? If the recent books on the Klan do not give valid and reliable answers to these questions, they also do not shed much light on why the Klan declined so rapidly after 1924. Nor do the available data tell much about the differential character of the decline—i.e., who dropped out first, and where.

In an ultimate sense, of course, questions such as these can never be "answered," especially given the secrecy with which the Klan operated. But from existing unanalyzed materials, some matters can be treated in greater depth. Thus, none of the students of the Klan has actually examined the data from primary contests and general elections in which Klan and anti-Klan candidates opposed each other. What, for example, was the composition of the 25 per cent of the Kansas electorate who voted for William Allen White for governor on a third-party anti-Klan ticket, when both major party candidates endorsed the Klan? There were many Grand Jury investigations of Klan violence, as well as indictments of some of those involved. Who were these people? Many ministers were publicly active as Klan supporters. Where were their churches located, what kind of parishioners did they have?

THE GENERALLY accepted explanations of the rise and fall of the second Klan do, of course, make a logical case. According to these explanations, the growth of the Klan reflected two basic processes. From a long-term secular point of view, it was part of a general movement within 19th-century American Protestantism toward the taking on of a nativist, anti-Catholic, prohibitionist, fundamentalist cast. This movement reached the peak of its political strength immediately after World War I, precisely at a point when the groups from which it drew its support had lost, or were clearly about to lose, their majority status. The census of 1920 indicated that urban dwellers were a majority for the first time in American history; Catholics, Jews, and others of non-Anglo-Saxon Protestant background were becoming important in politics, communications, and industry. American participation in World War I had involved the nation in an emotional binge emphasizing 100 per cent Americanism, and placing the onus of suspicion on those of foreign origin. Radicalism—in the form of Socialism and Communism—was also viewed with suspicion first for opposing the war, and then for its links with the Bolshevik menace. Returned Negro war veterans were demanding their rights. The changes brought about by war—the new mobility, industrial and urban growth—particularly as they affected public morality and behavior, disturbed those committed to the traditional verities of the provincial small-town and the rural, evangelical Protestant middle class. Support of the Klan was a way of resisting their loss of influence and status.

Perhaps the most interesting fact about Klan activity is that most of its vigilante violence was directed not against Negroes, Jews, Catholics, or the foreign-born, but rather against those involved in "immoral" activities: adulterers, patrons of prostitutes, drunks, bootleggers, and the like. As Alexander puts it, the "distinctive quality of the Klan . . . was its motivation, which lay not so much in racism and nativism as in moral authoritarianism. . . . The Klan was, more than anything else, an instrument for restoring law and order and Victorian morality. . . ."

THE ELEMENTS OF Klan support seem to have varied in different parts of the country, and even from one community to another in the same state. Alexander reports a correlation between the rapidity of growth of Southwestern cities and the presence of strong Klan chapters—a fact which suggests that the Klan recruited from among those who reacted negatively to the social strains of rapid growth, change in class relations, etc. (another possibility is that it drew its support from recent migrants from smaller communities). Most au-

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thorities insist that the Klan found backing in all strata, including the professions, and that if its support is to be labeled in "class" terms, it can only be described as the broad middle class.

Yet there is some evidence to the contrary. Reports on elections in Kansas, particularly in William Allen White's home city of Emporia, suggest that Klan candidates were disproportionately strong in working-class districts. More interesting is the fact that a study of the Midwest Klan indicates that "an impressive number of Milwaukee's Socialists also crossed the portals" of the Klan. A successful Socialist candidate for the Wisconsin Supreme Court was an avowed member and supporter of the Klan; he replied to the Socialists who attacked him for this by citing the large number of other Socialists in the Klan. Working-class and Socialist voters backed the Klan in spite of its open antipathy to trade unions and liberal political causes. Presumably, the main motivation for Klan support in the Midwest was anti-Catholicism. And if one is to believe the testimony of Hiram Evans, the Grand Wizard of the Klan in the 20's, the bulk of its membership came from less well-to-do people, particularly farmers. He wrote in 1926:

> We are a movement of plain people, very weak in the matter of culture, intellectual support, and trained leadership. . . . This is undoubtedly a weakness. It lays us open to the charge of being "hicks" and "rubes" and "drivers of second-hand Fords." We admit it.

Yet these scanty indicators that the mass base of the Klan lay with the poor and ignorant must be placed against the reports that the Klan had six million members at a time when the total eligible electorate (adult citizens) of the United States was about 59 million, and the number voting in a Presidential election (that of 1924) was under 30 million. If one accepts this common estimate of six million membership and deducts from the total of 59 million citizens of voting age the approximately one-third who were Catholics, Jews, and Negroes (and hence ineligible for Klan membership), and the female half of the population, it would appear that one out of three or four white Protestant men belonged to the hooded order. Even if one were to cut the estimate of Klan membership in half, the proportion of WASP membership would still be incredible. And the record clearly shows that for some period at least, a large number of these came from among the leading citizens of non-metropolitan communities.

THE QUESTION of why an organization as powerful as the Klan should have declined when it clearly appealed to some widespread and deeply felt need, and when it held a great deal of political power, is almost as difficult to answer as the question of why it grew. One partial answer given by its chroniclers is that the issues which concerned the Klan seemed to have been settled in its favor or to have lost saliency. The passage of the immigration-restriction and quota legislation of 1924 represented the final triumph of the Protestant nativist crusade; in the South, legislation outlawing the teaching of evolution meant victory for the fundamentalists; prohibition was firmly in the saddle, enforced by federal agents; the fears that Negro war veterans would upset the status quo vanished; and as World War I receded into memory, the emphasis on 100 per cent Americanism and alien plots declined.

Thus, for a brief moment, the white Protestant provincial American could believe himself back in control of his country. Presumably, the decline of the threats to white Protestant moral supremacy also facilitated the growth of revulsion among the more well-to-do supporters of the Klan against continued violence and vigilanteism. Various reports indicate that leading citizens who had backed the Klan or remained silent now turned openly against it for its violations of "law and order." And the Klan leaders themselves contributed to the growth of such moral revulsion. Exposés of sexual immorality and outright financial defalcations by leading Klansmen resulted in mass withdrawals from the Klan.

These reasons are all plausible, and perhaps correct. Yet a strong

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case can be made against them. It should be recalled that in 1920-21 —the beginning of the Klan's period of growth—the newspapers reported in detail on the immoral and crooked activities of major Klan figures. Moreover, although conservatism may have become the dominant political mood in 1924, a third party candidate, Robert La Follette, who had opposed American entry into World War I, ran for President with trade-union and Socialist party backing, and secured 16.6 per cent of the national vote. In that year, too, a second-generation Irish Catholic, Al Smith, sought the Democratic nomination for President, the first member of his faith to do so seriously within either of the major parties.

During the same period, stories concerning immorality and sex scandals in Hollywood filled the newspapers. The movies of the day contained fairly risqué scenes, including some nudity. Prohibition may have been dominant, but bootlegging was widespread. A recent historian of prohibition, Andrew Sinclair, concludes that it was effective only where the population sympathized with it, namely in the rural areas of the South and West. But in the *cities* of these regions—which were also major centers of Klan strength—speakeasies, bootleg liquor, and allied commercialized vices such as prostitution were prevalent. New York, Tammany Hall, wets, and Catholics supposedly represented much of what Klan supporters hated. Yet the nomination of Al Smith, who symbolized all of these, as the Democratic candidate for President in 1928, did not result in a Klan revival. The late 20's witnessed its continued political isolation and a decline in its membership rolls.

THE KLAN, of course, continued to exist through the 1930's, but it was a shadow of its earlier self. Perhaps the most interesting fact about it in this period was its emphasis on anti-labor and anti-Communist activities, and its alliances with different semi-fascist extremist groupings. The national organization founded in 1915 was officially dissolved in 1944 under pressure from the Division of Internal Revenue (it owed much more in back taxes than it could possibly hope to pay). Since World War II, there has been a variety of organizations calling themselves the Ku Klux Klan in various parts of the South. In large measure, they have been relatively weak, poor men's White Citizens' Councils, shunned by middle-class supporters of racism.

Why did the Klan rise and fall in the 1920's? Unfortunately, we do not know much more after reading the new books on the Klan than we did before, although they do make more readily available the record of its activities in most states. But regardless of how much more we learn about the Klan, the simple fact that only forty years ago a major segment of white Protestant America belonged to an organization which was explicitly nativist, anti-Negro, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic should haunt our dreams and our politics.

SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET, *a frequent contributor, is currently visiting professor of sociology at Harvard. His most recent book is* The First New Nation *(1963).*

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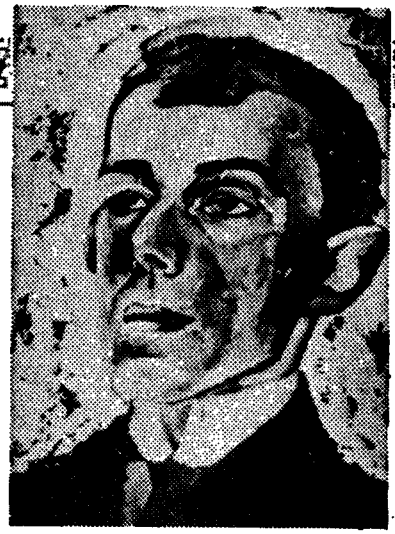

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"The city was older, better, and cleaner than anything that was going on in it. No dirt stuck to it. Into its splendid body bit the pincers of prison and barracks, along its street walked cyclopes in black felt boots, sotniks, *smelling of dog and wolf, guardsmen of the defeated army, wearing service caps and infected to the soles of their shoes with the foxy electricity of health and youth. On some people the possibility of committing murder with impunity acts like a fresh mineral bath, and for such people, with their childishly impudent and dangerously empty brown eyes, the Crimea was simply a spa where they were following a course of treatment, keeping to a stimulating and salutary regime, suited to the requirements of their nature."*

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FASHIONS OF REVOLT

THE NEW RADICALISM IN AMERICA. By CHRISTOPHER LASCH. *Knopf. 349 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM PHILLIPS

IT IS becoming more and more difficult to talk cogently about any kind of radicalism, new or old, because there are few common terms, few accepted points of reference, little agreement on what it is we are talking about. It is as if everything—ideas, events, we ourselves—were in motion. The only thing we can count on is that the new radicals will not have much use for the old ones.

In the past it was possible to fit new trends into a radical tradition. Now the very idea of continuity is in question. Many of the new radicals—and some older ones—feel that the thinking of the 30's is inapplicable to the problems created by the bomb, the stalemate with Russia and China, and the civil-rights movement. The younger radicals, particularly, might almost be said to define themselves by their rejection of earlier theories and by the priority they give to activity.

In such an anti-historical atmosphere, how can one write a history of radicalism? One way is to bypass the standard approaches. And this is precisely what Christopher Lasch, himself a product of the new thinking, has done. He has attempted a history of modern radicalism in America through a series of sketches of "representative" radicals. For his cast of characters, Lasch has chosen what he calls "archetypical" figures, by which he seems to mean people who are typical because they are untypical. The book has been praised in the proper places. And, despite its serious faults, it does have a certain value, mainly because of its unorthodox version of radical thought, which is seen as a branch of intellectual history. Such an approach—as I, and others, have suggested in the past—avoids the common practice by historians and sociologists of connecting ideas too literally with events. By its emphasis on problems peculiar to intellectuals, this approach also enables us to see how much of our political thinking reflects the state of intellectual life instead of the state of the world. But the trouble with Lasch's book is that his analyses of radical attitudes—and the world they are presumably directed at—are usually too arbitrary and too superficial. Big chunks of history and certain kinds of people and ideas simply do not exist for Lasch. And many of those he does fasten on are either outside the subject or too eccentric for any kind of social history, even though Lasch has tried to disarm us by arguing that some people speak for their time through their very uniqueness.

BECAUSE HE sees radicalism as the occupational disease of the intellectuals, Lasch transforms it into a cultural phenomenon, cut off from politics and economics. This segregation of the subject is not without its benefits, for it does lead to a number of insights into those moods and postures that can be explained best in personal or literary terms. But Lasch pushes the method too far, so that in the end radicalism becomes a life-style instead of a political style for responding to events, based on specific theories and modes of action. It is nice, for example, to know about Randolph Bourne's attitudes to women; but one would also like to know what influence Bourne had on later left-wing thought, especially in the 30's. It is also interesting to observe how Lincoln Steffens's personal life and character affected his views, but not at the cost of omitting the debates about the Russian revolution, which also influenced his thinking. In fact, much of what is normally assumed to constitute the history of radicalism is precisely what is left out of Lasch's book. There is little or nothing about the Socialists, the IWW, the Communists, Norman Thomas, Eugene Debs, the civil-rights movement, Marxism, the pacifists, the anarchists, Students for Democratic Society, nor any mention of Lionel Trilling, Mary McCarthy, Harold Rosenberg, Alfred Kazin, Lionel Abel, Granville Hicks, Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro, etc. There is one reference to Trotsky, as there is to Frank Sinatra.

One of the effects of dissociating radicalism from radical politics is that political distinctions are blurred. Thus Lasch usually brackets liberals with radicals, and, in general, seems to regard radicalism as a variety of liberalism. No doubt, the lines have not always been clear; and many people have shifted from one camp to another. Nor has there been, particularly in this country, a stable political force to which intellectuals could more or less permanently attach themselves. Still, a radical is not the same thing as a liberal, either in theory or in practice, and if the difference sometimes fades in literary circles, it is obviously decisive in many political situations, certainly where power and the course of a society are at stake. A notion that would equate, for example, Juan Bosch and Castro is not our most urgent need.

Similarly, one can carry only so far the idea that politics and culture have been mixed up in this country. Lasch is right in observing that the sense of dissociation from "American culture" felt by many intellectuals led to the merging of cultural and political dissent. Unlike intellectuals in Europe who assumed they *were* their national culture, Americans often felt threatened by the other culture, out there, claiming to be truly American. But Lasch fails to note that the more hard-boiled strains of American radicalism, particularly those associated with the Communists and

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the Socialists, and with the labor movement, did not think of themselves as outside "American culture." As populists, they considered themselves part of it. When Lasch says the "confusion of politics and culture is . . . essential to the new radicalism," he is thinking of Edmund Wilson, Paul Goodman, the liberal weeklies, not of Earl Browder, James Farmer, Walter Reuther, or SDS.

So vague and so broad is Lasch's notion of radicalism that almost anyone can be stuffed into it. Surely some stretching of the common definition is necessary to group such diverse persons as Margaret Sanger, Robert Herrick, Randolph Bourne, and John Dewey. What Lasch seems to have in mind is a mood of dissatisfaction and dissent, mostly moral, frequently sexual, sometimes social or political, that is expressed in personal rebellion and intellectual unorthodoxy, and in various kinds of progressive crusades. Such a loose formula really could cover single-taxers, beats, addicts, pacifists, ideologists of sex, fellow-travelers of all sorts, and some revolutionists. It would, of course, also take in the youth at all times, particularly since youth for Lasch always stands for revolt.

Now such an idea could make for an interesting and useful book. But it is not the book Lasch claims to have written; his book is supposed to be about radical politics, not radical temperament. Thus Lasch's apparent subject is often not his real subject. Though he seems to be talking about the make-up of the Left, he is preoccupied with what he calls "the rebellion of intellectuals against middle-class culture," and with its manifestations in "the alienation of women" and their "rebellion against the family claims," "the experimental life," the "beatniks," "bohemians," and "hipsters," and in "the emergence of an autonomous youth-culture."

This confusion of genres runs through the book. Jane Addams, who is interesting as a feminist reformer, as a neurasthenic who discovered the principle of useful social work for middle-class women doomed to pleasure and comfort, is presented as a forerunner of the modern radical. Mabel Dodge Luhan, who sought sexual salvation—and a salon—in exile, hardly belongs at all in a history of new radicalism. Nor do Lincoln Concord or Colonel House, whose radical credentials are not at all clear, and who at most might be thought of as White House radicals, that is, as members of the left wing of some amorphous brain trust.

THE WEAKEST PART of the book is its treatment of the modern period. Somehow we can be lulled into acquiescence by a re-creation of the past. But everything we think and do is being constantly challenged by the political ideas and the people who advance them in the present. As his representative moderns Lasch features Reinhold Niebuhr, Norman Mailer, Dwight Macdonald, and Sidney Hook—a choice that would make sense only if Lasch were illustrating the decline of the Left, for he seems to regard all of them as ex-radicals. In any case, the account of their thinking is so thin that one gets only a glimmering of why they took the stands they did, what effect they had, or what their contemporaries thought of them. In this context Niebuhr, after all, is a peripheral figure, and means something only in terms of the ups and downs of liberals who followed the swing from Communism to anti-Communism. Hook, on the other hand, is a more central character, who has both influenced and reflected the evolution of many radicals who came out of the 30's. Had Lasch gone into the questions and dilemmas that led Hook to his present position, he would have been able to indicate, too, how other people, facing the same problems, took different courses and managed to maintain more radical views. On the whole, Lasch is not very discriminating about Communism or anti-Communism, treating them as ideological blocs, without regard to variations of opinion or differences in time. Thus he fails to distinguish between the anti-Communism of the 30's, which was an attempt to hold on to socialist ideals, and the popular, cold war anti-Communism of today.

Macdonald and Mailer are given the same quick once-over. There is no effort to investigate the twists and turns in Macdonald's public stands, no explanation of the shift

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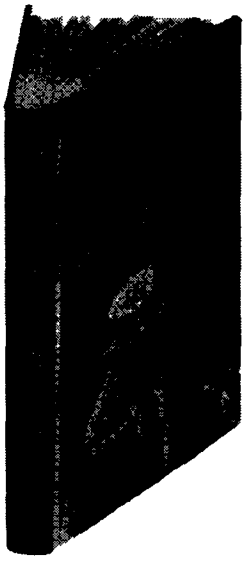

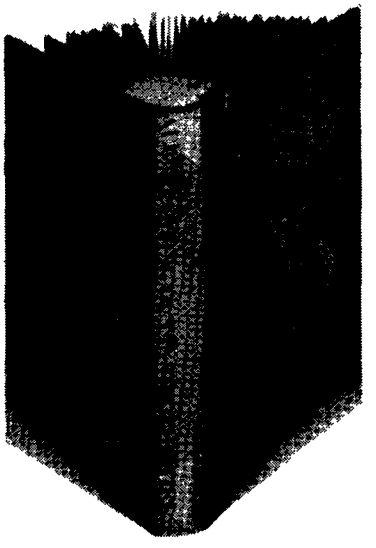

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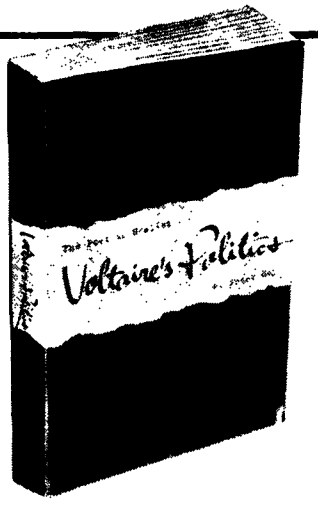

VOLTAIRE'S POLITICS
By PETER GAY
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from his earlier Trotskyism, no indication that in his *Politics* period (with which Lasch is most impressed) Macdonald's thinking was a blend of anarchism, pacifism, and moralism, no reference to the fact that more recently Macdonald's views have been generally conservative and not simply anti-Communist. Lasch does not seem to be aware that to understand Macdonald one has to understand the way he reflected or reacted to the ideas around him and to the people who held them. As for Mailer, Lasch's method breaks down completely. For he takes Mailer's violent associations at their face value, instead of regarding them the way a historian should, as symptoms of a general reshuffling of values, or the way a critic would see them, as expressions of Mailer's literary personality. In either case, he would have had to go deeper into Mailer's work and into the current situation.

UNFORTUNATELY, the current situation is something Lasch never gets to. The book ends with Norman Mailer at the Patterson-Liston fight. This event, Lasch reminds us, happened "half a century after James delivered his first lecture on pragmatism"; and its importance comes from the fact that between James and Mailer, according to Lasch, there is a "curious line of descent." But whatever unsuspected affinities Mailer and James might have, what a way to close a history of the new radicalism! Much as I admire Mailer as a writer and a person, I must say he is not the embodiment of the New Left, and one can't find out what it is up to by following Mailer around. After all, even if, as Lasch claims, "modern radicalism or liberalism can best be understood as a phase of the social history of the intellectuals," still the radical intellectuals, themselves, can be understood only as they relate to political issues and events. Otherwise we get a cultural history indistinguishable from high-class literary gossip. And no matter how typical we might believe eccentrics to be, cultural biography is no substitute for politics.

Obviously, a history of the new radicalism has to deal with two things: the movement and the system. Lasch has played up only one side of the picture. What he has done is to explore some of the more flamboyant and more marginal, really the more literary, aspects of the movement. What he has mainly left out are the people and the theories that have challenged the system. The most serious omission is that of the "new radicals" of the last few years, on the campuses, in the freedom movements, and in such organizations as SDS and PLP —for whom many of Lasch's favorite radicals are relics of an unusable past.

TRANSLATING A TRADITION

THE MODERN HEBREW POEM ITSELF. Edited by STANLEY BURNSHAW, T. CARMI, and EZRA SPICEHANDLER. *Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 220 pp. $5.75*

Reviewed by BARUCH HOCHMAN

AS THE LANGUAGE of the Zionist revival, Hebrew was meant to function as a kind of Jewish Esperanto. Not quite a living language, it was not quite a dead one either. More or less accessible to everyone within the pale of Jewish consciousness, it had been expressly adopted by writers in the Diaspora to affirm their sense of solidarity with the historical community which was Israel. Thus, unlike Esperanto, it was anything but synthetic; rich in associations that flowed into it from millennia of usage, it promised to unite communities dispersed in space while forging a link with the reaches of historical time.

The irony of the modern Hebrew revival, like the irony of Zionism itself, is that even as it joined, it also sundered. Zionism achieved a local habitation and a name, not for the metaphysical eternity of Israel but for the time-bound, space-bound state of Israel. Having been a language men chose to be theirs, Hebrew now imposed itself as the mother tongue of a society, and came to be bound up in the experience of Israel as the experience of Israel is bound up in it. The result is that its contemporary literature is almost as remote to foreigners who can read Hebrew as to those who cannot.

This insularization of Israeli

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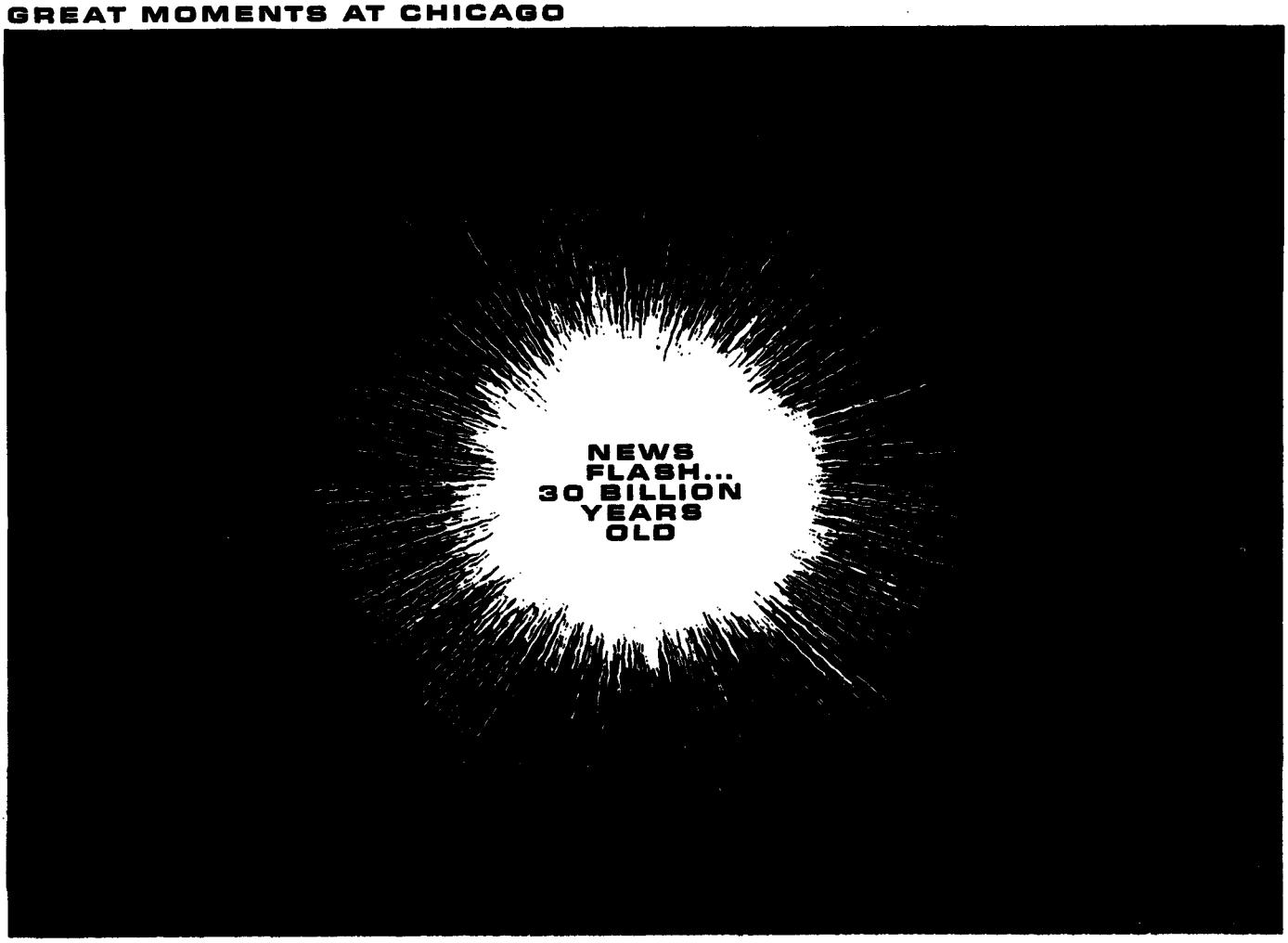
GREAT MOMENTS AT CHICAGO



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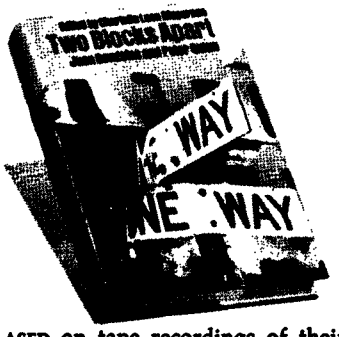

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writing has been intensified by the fact that its greatest strength, like that of modern Hebrew literature as a whole, lies in its poetry, and poetry is proverbially "what is lost in translation." Hebrew verse, moreover, presents special problems for a translator. From the beginning, modern Hebrew poets have emulated European models, and the magic of their verse stems in part from the play of old against new, from the tension between the habits of the language and the demands of its adaptation to new forms and feelings. Much of the power of modern Hebrew literature has, in fact, grown out of a peculiarly harsh struggle with language itself. Both magic and power tend to be lost in translation.

As a result, modern Hebrew literature has been one of those remote kingdoms of the spirit whose fabulous creatures have often been described but never quite seen. They tell of Bialik, the master, with his passionate sense of history and his sensitivity to the pangs of existence; of Tchernichowsky, with his affinity to nature, his masculinity, his yea-saying to life and the world. Yet Bialik, translated, has read like a minor Victorian afflicted with self-pity, and Tchernichowsky like a weak version of the mountain-loving Shelley or the womanizing Goethe.

THE EDITORS OF *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself* have tried to make modern Hebrew verse both intelligible and audible to an English-speaking audience. Stanley Burnshaw, who is also the editor of *The Poem Itself* (1960), believes it impossible to sever sense from sound in poetry. Poetry is "that which is lost in translation" because it lies in the closely welded unity of word, image, and idea. Burnshaw therefore tries to give us "the poem itself." His anthologies supply poems in "the original" accompanied by 1) a transliteration; 2) a literal translation, retaining the word order of the original; and 3) a commentary. The commentary provides the associations called up by words and images in the original, explaining the quality of sound, analyzing metric and "sonal" effects, and filling in the historical, literary, or biographical information needed to apprehend the "poem itself." In Robert Frost's phrase, the poem is "discussed into English." It is hoped that the reader who does not know Hebrew will "hear" the poem by sounding out its syllables, while pondering its paraphrasable and extra-paraphrasable meanings, projecting at each moment what he takes to be sense onto what he takes to be the sound.

It is an ingenious idea, and one not altogether alien to the nature of poetry. All poetry involves communication of a state of being from a speaker to an auditor. The auditor, who normally lives inside his own skin, must be made to enter into another man's play of consciousness. The formal peculiarities of verse—its heightened language, its rhythmic patterning, its metric lull and jolt—are partly intended to startle us out of ourselves and drive us into participation in another's experience. Hence, all poetry involves play-acting. When we fully read a poem, we adopt another's stance, momentarily entering into his affective posture.

The Poem Itself merely carries the element of imposture a step beyond its natural limits. It tries to enable us to project empathy across the sound barrier of language by uttering nonsense and by mimicking not the affective postures of the poet but those of a third person who usurps the poet's stance in order to make it our own. The system is kin to those music appreciation lectures that drown the ear in exposition even as the music, rendered inaudible, hums on in the background—except that here the music is designed for the deaf. If my experience of the one Russian text in *The Poem Itself* is typical, the effect of the system on the reader who does not know Hebrew will be catastrophic. One cannot mate sound with sense when one hasn't the faintest notion of the syntactic structure of a language, and absolutely no feeling for the associations of its words.

It should be immediately added, however, that this approach is extremely useful if one knows enough Hebrew to grope his way into the syntactic and substantive movement of the poems themselves. And those who do not know the

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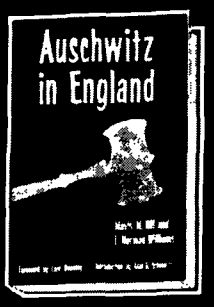

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language can learn a good deal about Hebrew poetry once they abandon the pretense of penetrating to "the poem itself." The prose translations bring images and ideas clearly into focus; the commentaries are excellent; the historical survey is ample, though inelegant. Altogether, it provides an epitome of the entire tradition of modern Hebrew poetry since 1890 in a form that renders it legible, if not audible, to the general reader. One becomes aware of individualities in poems and poets, then of the sharp demarcations among the generations and schools of poets, and finally of the underlying unity of the entire tradition.

AT THE OUTSET, there is the immediacy of Bialik's work, with its direct designs on our feelings, its vividly clear imagery, and its grace-notes of whimsy: Bialik is probably not a "great" poet as Rilke or Yeats is great, but he is a remarkable one —brilliant, imaginative, and honestly committed to massive themes of pathos and prophecy. Then there is the disoriented, riddle-posing, self-pitying inwardness of Bialik's younger contemporaries, like Fichman and Steinberg, whose mystique of night, loneliness, and the soul both dramatizes and obscures personality. And there is Tchernichowsky, who forged a secular Hebrew to articulate his vigorous, world-loving and world-suffering feeling for the stars above the Crimea and Canaan alike.

Yet, for all their particular differences, Bialik and Tchernichowsky were both Russian Jews and men of the 19th century, flung into the unsettling modernity of their times. Both sought desperately to find a way to tie themselves to the past and to assure their future; both led exemplary lives in which their personal quest was a matter of grave public interest. Like Wordsworth or Whitman, they thought of themselves as spokesmen of a community that, at its best, shared their values and needed their vision.

This is not true of the "Palestinian" poets, who made up the following generation of writers. Born in Eastern Europe at the turn of the century, they emigrated to Palestine in the 20's and came to the fore in the 30's. This generation bears the mark of their century, implicated in its spiritual vagaries, committed to its self-conscious, symbol-laden, "modernist" virtuosity. Yet Greenberg, Alterman, Shlonsky, Ratosh, and their peers also stand apart from the Symbolists, Expressionists, and Surrealists they emulate. Their exulting despair, their defiant prayerfulness arise out of an apocalyptic impulse; they combine the messianic vision of the pioneer with the torment of the isolated individual who has broken away from the old loyalties and conflicts of the synagogue and *shtetl*. Yet some traditional frames of reference survive. There is still a sense of being absorbed into a communal endeavor, of being unable (or unwilling) to cast loose from the community's vision of struggle, death, dissolution, and hope of rebirth. "Dress me, good [pious] mother, in a glorious coat of many colors,/And with dawn lead me to toil," Shlonsky prays. And Greenberg incants: "Like chapters of prophecy, my days burn in all the revelations,/My body among them like a lump of metal to be forged./And over me stands my God the blacksmith and hammers with might."

The next generation—the Israeli generation—has slipped these moorings. Its members are writers of the mid-century, closer to their European and American contemporaries than their elders could have been. They tend to be "existentialist" in orientation, unapocalyptic—even anti-apocalyptic—in sensibility, dryly lyric in tone, and disjunctive in idiom. Concerned with the immediate nuances of experience, they abandon the large effect and the sweeping gesture. Their relentless craftsmanship bespeaks an admiration for Rilke, Eliot, Auden, and the French Symbolists. But their world-weariness, their preoccupation with the blank world of creeping bureaucratization, their sense of the mechanization of experience (even the nightmare, once harbinger of surreal transcendence, is seen as mechanical), and their vaunted cynicism at the betrayal of expectation, personal and historical—all of this calls to mind the ravished innocence of the Beat scene. Their re-

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mote, ironic poems of lost worlds of childhood, the broken communion of love, the ghostly horrors of the wasteland outside windows in rooms where people chatter and the poet bears silent witness, are meant to express the outrage of those who expected more, who demanded better of life. It is almost as though expectation had been the center of their existence, and its loss an ineffable nightmare.

THE flamboyant emotionalism Hebrew writing once shared with Yiddish letters has vanished; so have strong ideological commitments and group identifications. Current Israeli writing celebrates its emancipation from "Zionism," it boasts of its concern with "universality" and with "individuality."

But the quest for individuality often leads to group non-conformity, and "universality" is often merely another term for abstractness. Goethe preached individuality, but Shakespeare's Hamlet is a far more richly distinctive person than Goethe's Faust. Much Israeli poetry, for all the precision of its imagery and its deftness of language, is highly abstract—abstracted, that is, from the immediate circumstances of experience. Lacking clear references in space and time, it rarely manages to define the objects of desire and hence to specify the desires that grieve the poets.

The strength of much current writing in the West comes, of course, from just this effort to explore a certain poignant vagueness at the heart of modern experience. Presumably the poets of contemporary Israel have adopted this subject not because they have willfully fallen prey to foreign influences but because the quality of their experience has come to approximate that of intellectual life elsewhere. The old sense of historical continuity has been lost. So has the Zionist struggle to overcome the alienation and disorientation that once made *luftmenschen* of Jews. Instead of striving to belong to the community that the tradition has struggled to create, the Israeli writer more easily feels himself part of the seemingly universal malaise.

But though he rarely affirms the traditional values of either Judaism or Zionism, his work discloses some suggestions of an underlying continuity with the past. Every generation of Hebrew writers has rebelled against its elders, only to inherit some of the things it rebelled against. Today, even in those writers like the "Canaanites," who have divorced themselves from both Judaism and Zionism, one finds lurking in the background of their consciousness the long vistas of the past, especially the biblical and pre-biblical past; or the holocaust; or the experience of bureaucratization within a state that arose out of massive human and ideological assertions. Thus, one has the sense that Israeli alienation, unlike that of our disaffected poets, is alienation *from* something—something that has not been completely emptied of meaning.

Still, it is difficult to define the elements that make for continuity. Obviously, there is nothing particularly "Jewish" about much of the work in this volume. Nor is there anything blatantly "Israeli." It is, in fact, almost as hard to say what is Israeli about Israeli verse as it is to define the Israeli quality of its art—with the difference, of course, that the very language and technique of Hebrew verse provide a distinctive medium of expression, as paint and canvas never do. In such a dilemma good anthologies (whatever their pretensions) come as a blessing, since they absolve one of the work of definition by provisionally embodying the tradition itself.

CHAINS AND COUCHES

MADNESS AND CIVILIZATION: A HISTORY OF INSANITY IN THE AGE OF REASON. By MICHEL FOUCAULT. Translated by RICHARD HOWARD. *Pantheon. 299 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by PETER GAY

IN OUR MAD WORLD, a serious study of madness invites facile irony. Who is sane? Who is mad? Michel Foucault has found it impossible to resist this pair of questions, and he opens his book with Pascal's familiar *pensée*: "Men are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad would amount to another form of mad-

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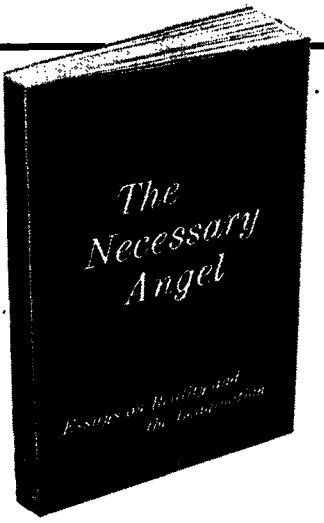

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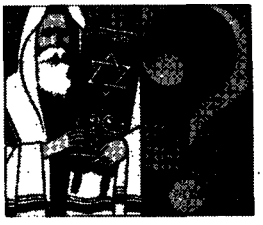

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ness." To thrust this *bon mot* at the reader, and at the very beginning, is perhaps merely venal: it takes strength to do without clichés fashionable among the arbiters of culture. More serious is Foucault's willful opacity; again and again he clothes his thought in formulations in which dim echoes take the place of precision, and pretentiousness borrows the shape of profundity. His style, I suspect, derives from two of the most unfortunate influences to which a French writer can expose himself: the inflated rhetoric current among some of the social historians (often very good ones) in the circle around the *Annales,* and the existentialist cant of much modern German philosophy as filtered through Sartre's recent metaphysical work—France has been invaded by Germany, to her damage, more than once, and not by troops alone. What are we to make of sentences like these: "What appears to us today as a clumsy dialectic of production and prices then possessed its real meaning as a certain ethical consciousness of labor, in which the difficulties of the economic mechanisms lost their urgency in favor of an affirmation of value." Or, "Madness designates the equinox between the vanity of night's hallucinations and the nonbeing of light's judgments." Even in their context, such pronouncements —and there are hundreds—convey vague, meaningless shapes but no information; and let no one blame the translator: Richard Howard's version is, alas, faithful.

All this is a pity, for Foucault is intelligent and learned, and his theme is important: the emergence of the idea of madness in the classical period, from the 16th through the 18th centuries. Renaissance burghers put madmen on ships of fools and sent them from one port to another; Shakespeare and Cervantes portrayed madmen as tragic heroes; and in the course of the 17th century the new absolutist regimes confined the insane in the same institutions into which they flung beggars and murderers. All this, Foucault insists, means that the very perception of madness in those centuries must have significantly differed from ours: "What for us is merely an undifferentiated sensibility"—that is, to throw together the poor, the criminal, and the mad—"must have been, for those living in the classical age, a clearly articulated perception." Just so: this is a true historian's observation, and it leads to an inquiry into the place and meaning of what we now call insanity in the total structure of classical culture. Evidently Foucault, a psychologist, has not gone to school to historians for nothing.

IN OBEDIENCE TO his historical instincts and almost, one might say, against his will, Foucault has written an important book. His history is embedded in, and often overwhelmed by, his gratuitous philosophizing, but what there is of it, is fascinating; his pages reluctantly yield some brilliant intuitions, much harrowing and forgotten detail. The foundation of houses of confinement in the 17th century; the classification of mental aberrations in the 18th century; the discovery of madness as a disease rather than a vice, a destiny, or a threat to social orderliness; the often pathetic searches for a cure; the gradual segregation of the insane from other practitioners of unreason; and the birth of the asylum—all these Foucault reports, and reports vividly. *Madness and Civilization,* then, is a book deserving of wide attention.

But even if his history and his philosophy appear (at least to this reviewer) distinct and ill-suited, they obviously belong together for Foucault, who has clearly intended to write more, not less, than a history of madness in the classical age. He has tried to explicate the very categories of reason and unreason, and in the process to launch a polemic against the conception of psychiatry first enunciated by Philippe Pinel and his contemporary William Tuke; hence his revisionist effort to reassess the history and significance of the modern asylum. For Foucault, these famous liberators of the mad did not liberate them at all. Though Pinel and Tuke quite literally struck off their chains in melodramatic and well-publicized gestures, it was only to subject them to the subtler, more effective tyranny of the insane asylum, with its insidious manipulation of the madman—who is

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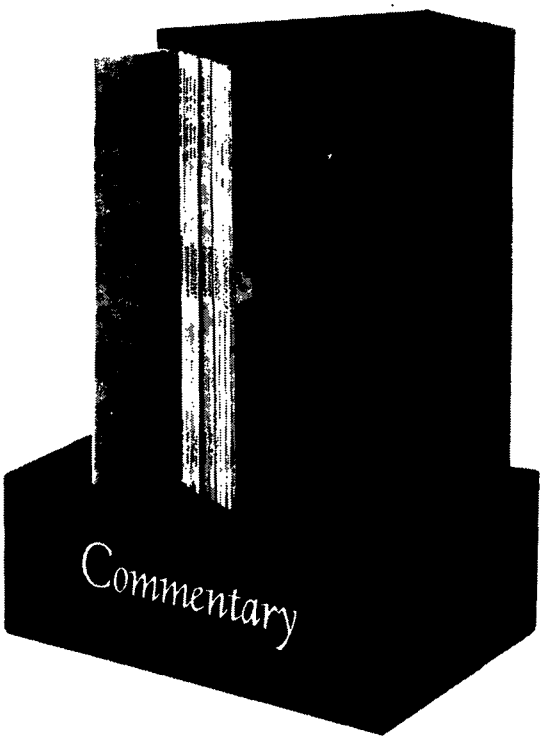

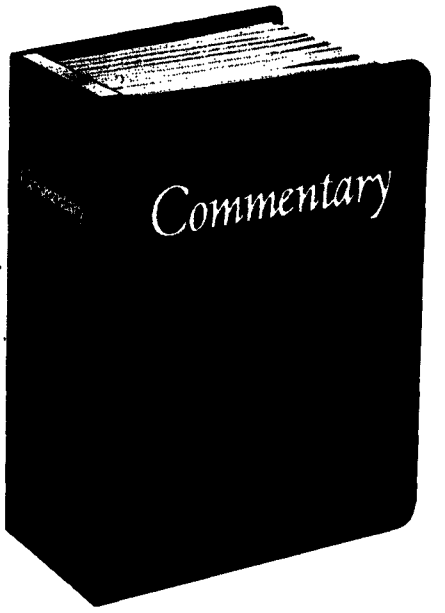

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treated as a child; its elevation of the physician into a charismatic and omnipotent figure of authority; and the perpetual, humiliating judgments of the patient on the part of his sane supervisors. "In fact Tuke created an asylum where he substituted for the free terror of madness the stifling anguish of responsibility; fear no longer reigned on the other side of the prison gates, it now raged under the seals of conscience." And so, "The asylum no longer punished the madman's guilt, it is true; but it did more, it organized that guilt." Pinel for his part did not turn the asylum into a haven of scientific research and medical practice, but "into an instrument of moral uniformity and of social denunciation." Freud, Foucault suggests, therefore deserves great credit; he "went back to madness at the level of its language," and thus "restored, in medical thought, the possibility of a dialogue with unreason." Yet even Freud's liberating influence remains limited and is inescapably compromised, for in his therapy the authoritative physician remains central. Hence, "psychoanalysis has not been able, will not be able, to hear the voices of unreason"; it "can neither liberate nor transcribe, nor most certainly explain, what is essential in this enterprise." What then remains for us to do in order to restore the "dark freedom" of madness? Perhaps nothing but a clear and sympathetic reading of Goya's paintings of madmen; of Sade's untrammeled pursuit of action since all is, after all, the gift of nature; of Nietzsche's and Van Gogh's madness, which form an inexplicable but essential part of their work; and, finally, the understanding that "the world that thought to measure and justify madness through psychology must justify itself before madness." But as to this conclusion, I confess, I am unclear, for I find it impossible to reduce the last chapter, and the brief fervent conclusion, to anything more coherent than this.

YET FOUCAULT'S tone is unmistakable, and his nostalgia overwhelming. For him, clearly, the world that launched the Ships of Fools was better, freer, indeed saner, than the world of asylums without bars or even the analyst's couch, which is, for all its libertarian rhetoric, still a prison. This is an appealing doctrine in our time of doublespeak, electronic invasions of privacy, high talk, and mass murder. Yet, if I understand Foucault's message rightly, it is little more than old-fashioned primitivism refurbished with impressive modern learning; it is of a piece with those recent philosophical reconsiderations of Freud which seek to disinherit the superego and recommend, no matter how obliquely, a return to the unrepressed joys of polymorphous perversion available to children, or to happy savages. But this is a false, as well as an impossible doctrine, no matter how faulty and often vicious the modern asylum may be: as the child needs its quantum of anxiety and repression to become human at all, as the savage is enslaved by his taboos, his fears, his needs to practice his rituals correctly, so the madman, in his "dark freedom," is a slave as well—a greater slave than they. Reason, as Kant, and in a rather different way Freud, recognized, is, precisely as it is an instrument of internal legislation, an instrument of freedom.

THE FOUR-LETTER NOVEL

AUGUST IS A WICKED MONTH. By EDNA O'BRIEN. *Simon & Schuster. 244 pp. $3.95.*

A GREEN TREE IN GEDDE. By ALAN SHARP. *New American Library. 371 pp. $5.00.*

SECOND GENERATION. By RAYMOND WILLIAMS. *Horizon. 347 pp. $4.95.*

Reviewed by D. J. ENRIGHT

ELLEN "was twenty-eight and had skin like a peach," and lived apart from her husband and little son. A man called Hugh sleeps with her on their second meeting. But Ellen "longed to be free and young and naked with all the men in the world making love to her, all at once." So she treats herself to a holiday on the French Riviera, and the first sight she sees in her hotel is a naked man. This is symbolic. A hotel violinist and a room-boy attempt to rape her—the service in these French hotels!—but this isn't quite fancy enough for Ellen, and

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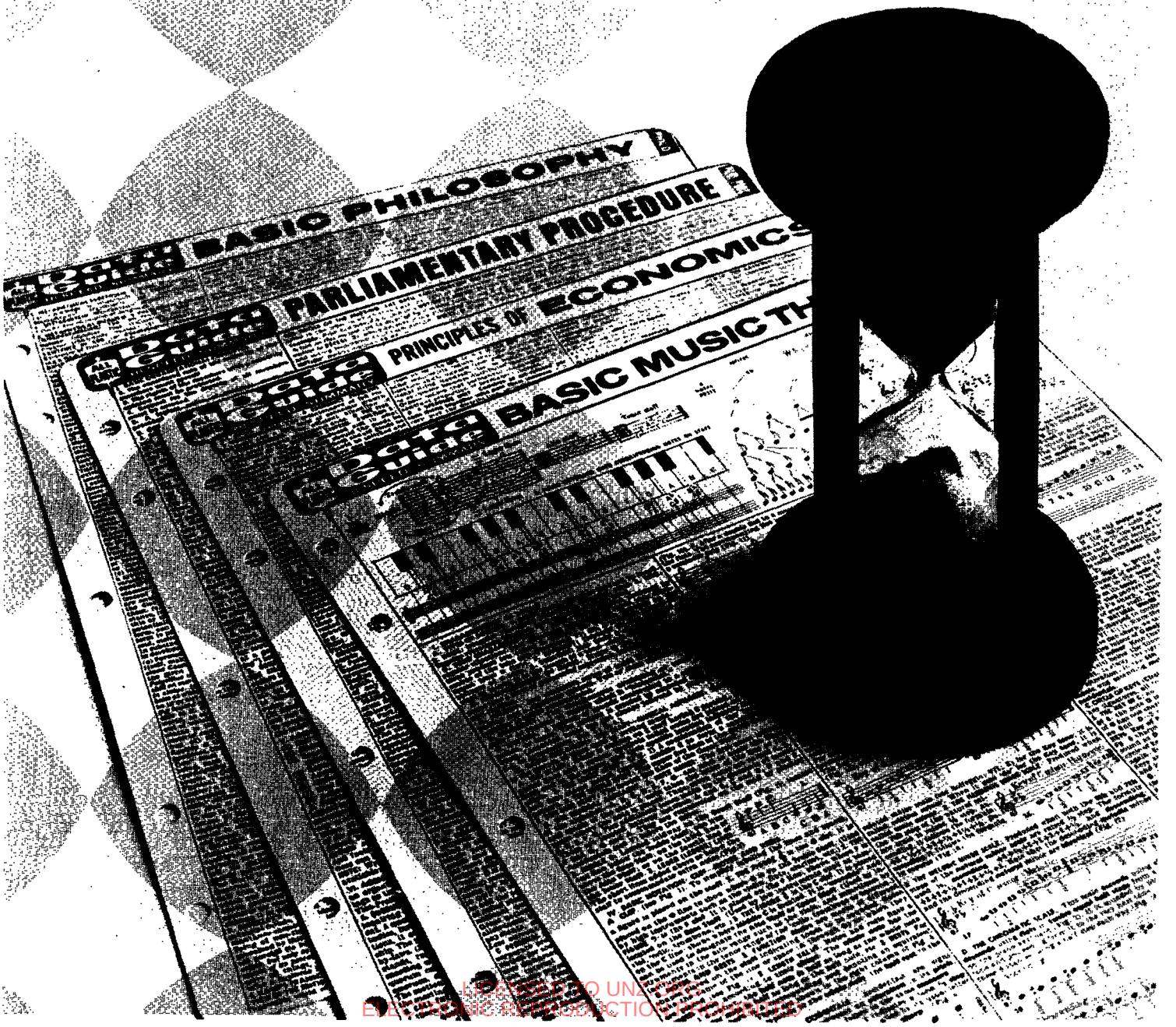

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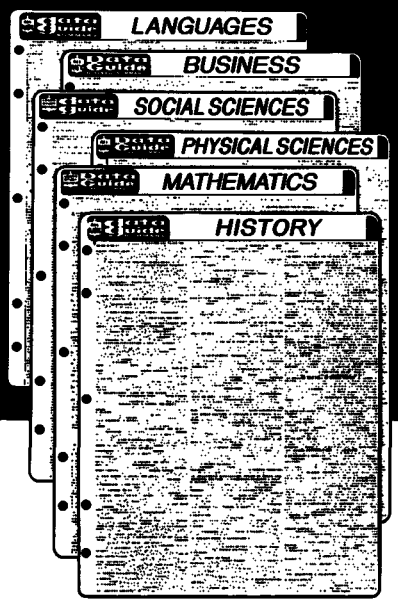

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she attaches herself to a sub-Fitzgeraldian party of rich holiday-makers with a villa of their own to make holiday in, American film people, homosexual and heterosexual, and a scattering of silent enigmatic Chinese slit-skirts. "This is living at last," thinks this Catholic girl from the Irish bogs, and she spends the night with the older man whom she doesn't want instead of the film star she does. A strand of philosophy is provided by an aging woman with thinning tinted hair. "Two kinds of men, they fuck everyone or they fuck no one. All very sad."

Then Ellen receives the news that her young son has been killed in a road accident, and she goes to pieces, but not home. A little later on she gets to sleep with the film star at last—the reader was beginning to think he belonged to that second category of men—and it is rather nice, except that the film star disappears directly afterward. *Avec raison,* since Ellen finds herself suffering from an embarrassing complaint. Which is a great pity, since when she returns to England (East, West, home's best, and the addresses of clinics can be found in public lavatories) she can't sleep with the kind man, Hugh, whom she now meets for the third time. But the novel has a happy ending: it's only a secondary infection.

The plot of *August Is a Wicked Month* lends itself to caricature. It also lends itself to Fanny Hillism. I am not suggesting that the book is pornographic within the meaning of the law, but it is insistently and relentlessly distasteful, sickeningly voyeuristic. I enjoyed Miss O'Brien's first two novels and felt some admiration for her third, *Girls in their Married Bliss,* which (one can now see) gave hints in the story of Kate of what was to follow. The new novel is a hangover from the Kate and Baba books, a discharge of accumulated bile, to put it politely. The old jokes reappear here, with the humor drained out of them. In the previous novel, Baba suggested that the homeless Kate could safely spend the night in a bath outside an ironmonger's shop on the King's Road as long as she hung out a sign saying, "Keep out. Gonorrhoea"—but there is no Baba here. And Kate didn't like talking to the psychiatrist, "it violated her sense of privacy." Alas, Miss O'Brien has no compunctions about Ellen's sense of privacy—or ours. *August Is a Wicked Month,* in spite of the individual talent its author has previously displayed, is a typical contemporary novel. It tells all—it tells nothing.

"All over the world they are, beautiful, beautiful women, and I'll never touch them. Oh, it makes me want to cry," complains Cuffee, one of the three musketeers of Alan Sharp's first novel, *A Green Tree in Gedde.* It seems a pity he can't get together with Miss O'Brien's Ellen, though he does pretty well as it is, starting with his sister and working downward to French prostitutes (with whom he limbers up for the more trying bouts). Moseby, whose motto is *"Coitus ergo sum,"* stays at home in Greenock, where he is able to pursue his philosophical interests, though more drably. Gibbon can't make up his mind whether he is homo- or heterosexual, and at least this gives him something interesting to do—i.e., think—while the others, who know what they are, are merely doing the one or the other. Mr. Sharp's writing, except when it is consciously clever or unintentionally mawkish, is consistently alive. The reader doesn't get that common effect of blurred casualness suddenly changing to a breathless convergence of attention when the author arrives at something that matters—sex, violence, sickness. If one of Mr. Sharp's characters goes to a movie, for instance, then you hear what the character thinks of the film. Mr. Sharp's attentiveness is all-embracing, that is to say, and not tendentious. But the fact remains that most of what it is given to embrace is sexual, straight and kinky—and much of it is repetitious or unenlightening. The author is a gifted word-boy, but his "ever-sexpanding yoniverse" is really a small world, far too small for this large novel, announced as the first volume of a trilogy. One's final feeling is of regret that a born writer should have taken the easy way out, that someone with a new way of saying things should have picked mostly on the old things to say. However, Mr. Sharp has only

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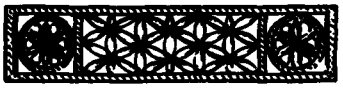

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just started, and *A Green Tree in Gedde* promises more than the usual promising first novel.

IN THE EARLY pages of Raymond Williams's novel there occurs a long and careful description of a young man pushing a young girl on a swing. "He stood with his legs apart, leaning forward, and waited for her to come to him. . . ." The experienced reader of contemporary novels, accustomed to this kind of lead-in, will anticipate an imminent dose of some sort of sex. But Mr. Williams is simply describing a young man pushing a young girl on a swing. To some extent it is a sad reflection on the predictability of current novelists that we should find many of Mr. Williams's pages startlingly original.

The setting of *Second Generation,* like the title of the book, is frankly parabolical: an English university town which also accommodates a large automobile factory, gown and overalls side by side. Peter, son of a shop steward at the factory, is researching in social science; the factory is hit by redundancy; Peter's mother, embittered by working-class life and the working-class struggle, has a brief and immediately regretted affair with a university lecturer who is active (theoretically at least) on the sex-freedom side of the struggle—an aspect of radicalism which Mr. Williams clearly disapproves of. Discovering his mother's misdemeanor, Peter runs away from home, in his father's old car; rather oddly, the misappropriation of the car seems to loom largest in this working-class calendar of crime. Eventually reconciliation is effected all round, and Peter declines an invitation to academic America in order to marry the girl next door and work in the factory, and then write about his community from the inside and for the sake of the inside. This is the parable of the return of the Scholarship Boy.

What Mr. Williams wants to get away from—and Peter does, too—is the kind of sociology which talks about "Adult male, semi-skilled, 45, married." Such language is so uninformative, to say the least, that even a writer of fiction could hardly stray much further from the truth. But Mr. Williams is fighting against his own proclivity for abstract exposition and argument, and he doesn't altogether win. His characters nag away at one another or at themselves—it is not always easy to see what is biting them—and the general impression is one of sustained cantankerousness. The love scenes are cold and pedantic (there are, of course, worse things to be), and sober-sided youth finds little difficulty in restraining reckless middle-age. "Fornication is a social fact. . . . Other people are affected, and so law is relevant." Peter is clearly meant to be a bit of a prig, but one wonders whether his author realizes quite how grossly priggish he is.

At the same time Mr. Williams's unrelenting seriousness brings its own rewards. What can be fairly documented—like the processes of industrial dispute in this "soft-voiced Britain"—is well and truly documented. Human issues are raised, and hammered away at, and if often no conclusive answer is reached, then that is a sign of the author's honesty. "I'm asking for the connection, between work and living," says Peter, and it is a hard job to define that connection, even to make a start. Though it hardly rivets one's attention, *Second Generation* is an extremely decent book, decent in all sorts of ways.

One of those ways, though one would rather call it a way of being intelligent, is the recognition that bed isn't everything, that bed is a place you get out of in order to go to work, and that a lot of what happens in bed simply cannot be communicated through the printed word. By now the era of the sexual freedom of the press is so well advanced that it may even be approaching its voluntary end. Despite Brigid Brophy's energetic enthusiasm for sex-in-print as reasserted in the *New Statesman* of late ("If there is a book about sex in the house I find it pretty hard *not* to read it"), signs of boredom and decent distaste are increasingly common. If obliged to listen to gossip about her neighbors, Miss Brophy would prefer it to concern their sex life rather than their delphiniums, but many of us observe in ourselves a new and growing interest in flowers, or, after

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John Updike's account of Rabbit Angstrom's behavior in bed, we find Mr. Updike's account of an old car's behavior on the roads positively exciting. The facts seem to be these: under present permissive conditions, sad or vicious sex, sex as perversion or aggression or delusion, is a ready stand-by for the inferior writer, while the good writer finds love just as difficult to write about as it always was. "Follow love and it will flee," the proverb says; sex only flees when sales figures tell it to.

DOWN THE LINE

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE NEGRO? By ROBERT PENN WARREN. *Random House. 454 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH EPSTEIN

IN *Segregation,* one of his earlier works on "The Problem," Robert Penn Warren attempted to uncover the various philosophies of social change prevalent in the South after the 1954 Supreme Court decision. Consisting mainly of interviews with Southerners about their plans for dealing with integration, the book, published in 1956, anticipated what we now know to be yet another failure of a large segment of the white South to come to reasonable terms with history. Reading it today as a historical document, however, one is more struck by the changes—in emotional climate, if not in material conditions—that have taken place in nine years. In 1956, for example, a Southern Negro lawyer told Warren: "A Negro, he doesn't really know some things, but he just goes walking pregnant with worries, not knowing their name. It's he lost his purpose, somewhere. He goes wandering and wondering, and no purpose."

There are very few pages in *Who Speaks for the Negro?* which do not serve to invalidate that remark; moreover, the very conception of the book shows how much things have changed. As in *Segregation,* Warren continues to be interested in philosophies of social change, but now he puts his questions exclusively to Negroes: to civil-rights leaders and rank-and-

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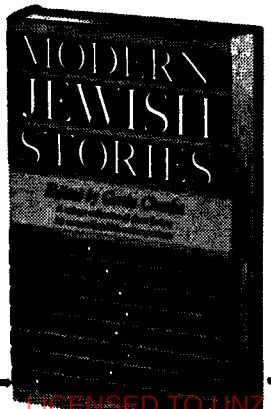

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filers, to writers and artists, civil servants and businessmen, college presidents and students—to a variety of people who, as the saying goes, have been down the line. And rightly has Warren chosen to do this, for the fact is that for the first time Negroes are now in a position to exert a major influence on decisions concerning their future in this country. Indeed, for the moment it appears that the initiative for any radical realignment of American society has passed into Negro hands. As Warren suggests, it is almost as if the helots had been called in to rewrite the Constitution of Athens.

IN THIS LONG and valuable inquiry, Warren seeks to determine precisely what the helots have in mind. Although a large part of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* is made up of interviews caught on that most impersonal of modern instruments, the tape recorder, it is in many ways a very personal book: interspersed with the interviews are editorials, long analytical essays, and fragments of autobiography. The interviews themselves are conducted with an utter lack of condescension—no matter whether Warren is talking with Carl Rowan, formerly head of the United States Information Agency, or a freshman girl at Tougaloo College in Mississippi. They are introduced by short, often quite brilliant, biographical and physical sketches, and are occasionally interrupted by a personal aside, a reminiscence from Warren's own past, or a simple notice that "here there was a change of tape."

It would be rather more than naïve to assume that anyone as interested in social change as Warren doesn't have some firm ideas of his own on the subject; nor does he try to hide them in any way. In the course of his interview with Dr. Kenneth Clark, for instance, the name of the abolitionist John Brown comes up, and Warren tells us that a French critic, in writing an introduction to one of his novels, once remarked "that the mythic Brown figure recurs again and again in my fiction, in various disguises, the man who at any cost would strike out for absolute solutions—a type toward whom, I sup-

pose, I am deeply ambivalent." As a novelist, Warren may well feel ambivalent toward men like Brown, but as a student of social change he clearly views the type as an abomination; in the latter capacity, in fact, he is the least apocalyptic of men.

Such a disposition is frequently of considerable advantage for the task at hand, as when it enables Warren to pick his way through a goodly portion of the rhetoric of the civil-rights movement. Consider, for instance, the slogan "Freedom Now!"; Warren is always asking his subjects what is meant by "Now." Many of them are hung up dreadfully by this simple question, and the closest thing to an authentic answer is supplied by SNCC's Robert Moses (now known as Robert Parris), who confesses that the slogan is really a poetic statement.

HIS OWN distaste for absolute solutions leads Warren to react less than favorably to those who cry out for them: Adam Clayton Powell, the late Malcolm X, James Forman, and, on a much more sophisticated level, James Baldwin, who is felt by many to be something like the civil-rights movement's Trotsky. Baldwin's writing has always been rife with contradictions, and Warren is devastatingly thorough in pointing them out. On any given day, for instance, Baldwin will accuse the white man of inflating the Negro's sexual prowess and then turn around and speak of "the poverty of the white cat's bed." And when he is not contradictory, he is likely to be excessively bitter. Thus he told Warren that no matter what the white worker for SNCC or CORE does —and presumably he includes Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman in this category—"his work has no resonance." Something other than mere rhetoric or foggy thinking is at work here, and I think Warren puts his finger on it better than anyone else who has written about Baldwin:

> [It] is not that what Baldwin has to say in any one instance is not interesting and significant; it is that he instinctively makes this shift of the center of gravity of a discussion, toward an undercut, toward the more general and more charged, toward the absolute. He is, in fact, impatient of the nagging problems of ordinary situations, of half-measures and compromises, of the slow grind of adjustment and improvisation. He must turn toward that "interior life" which is real, turn inward to be refreshed at the foundation of his own being. But some people—including many Negroes—must deal with the nag and slow grind. They must try to discipline their interior life to some sad facts of the exterior world in order to change those facts.

Perhaps Baldwin is not the Movement's Trotsky after all, but rather, in an informal and rather elegant way, the head of what might be called its Agitprop Section. Agitprop certainly has its uses, and not only the eloquent brand dispensed by James Baldwin. Some of the young SNCC workers in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, for example, have told me that the late Malcolm X was of inestimable value in arousing the teenage Negro community in that city. There had been copies of the Muslim newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* around the SNCC office, and some of the local kids read them and were greatly impressed by Malcolm's articles and speeches—not so much by their content as by the sheer (and to them unique) fact that here was a Negro telling the white man straight out to go to hell. It was a new and not altogether unhealthy experience for them. But at some point one must do more than tell the white man to go to hell; at some point, agitprop must yield to genuine thought. A particularly poignant moment occurs in the course of Warren's interview—by far the most candid in the book—with Ralph Ellison, when the author of *Invisible Man,* whose remarks are free of all agitprop, says: "Perhaps I can talk this way because I'm not a leader."

AS FOR THE leaders, Warren writes of them: "In general, the Negro leadership has given the public little reason to be appalled, for in a situation as complicated as this it would not be easy to imagine a higher level of idealism, dedication, and realistic intelligence." By and

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large, one can agree. The civil-rights leaders' commission is awesome and terrifying in its dimensions, and it is unfortunate for Warren's book that, as Ellison suggests, candor is not—not yet, anyway—part of that commission. Warren hangs in there all right, trying to draw the Big Brass out, trying to pry them loose from the images so carefully cultivated over the years. But in the pages of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* they are the old familiar gang: Roy Wilkins, reasonable yet reasonably militant; Whitney Young, solid and aggressive, coming on like a pro tackle with a doctorate in sociology; James Forman, a combat officer, slightly contemptuous of anyone not serving with a line outfit; the rugged and austere James Farmer; the saintly Martin Luther King, Jr.

Along with a high level of idealism, dedication, and intelligence, these men share one other characteristic: an unrelenting need for victories. According to Whitney Young, victories are needed to contain the danger of "overreach" and to forestall violence. But they are also needed to perpetuate the present leadership. Even now SNCC, the most revisionist-minded of the civil-rights organizations, is questioning the necessity for any national leadership whatsoever.

Clearly, then, positions of leadership in the civil-rights movement are not strong on tenure or other security benefits normally accruing to those who serve long and faithfully in high places. One explanation for such a state of affairs has it that this is perfectly natural, that the civil-rights leader's precarious position is very much part of something called "the revolution of rising expectations," by which is meant that each victory only makes one's following hungrier for bigger victories. But the trouble goes deeper and is, I think, peculiar to the movement at this particular point in its history. The main problem, as the slum organizer Saul Alinsky among others has pointed out, is that the movement has largely remained a single-issue movement, attracting people who are interested in one thing and one thing only—the Negro.

As a single-issue movement, it has definite limitations. One cannot, for

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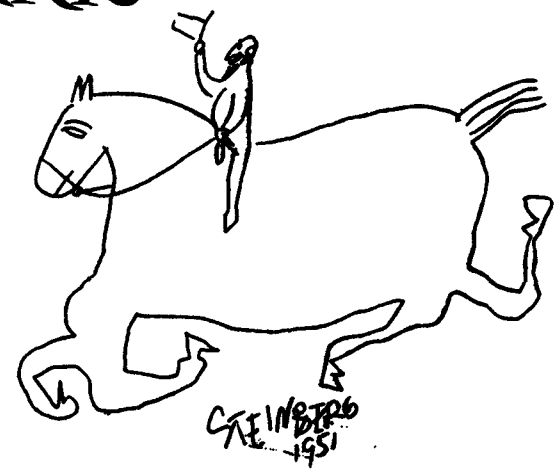

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example, very well demand jobs for undereducated, unskilled Negroes if in fact there are few jobs for anyone who is undereducated or unskilled. The point is that discrimination can no longer be solely blamed for the situation in which many Negroes now find themselves; for if the remaining barriers of race were instantly to be dropped, there would still be a large number of people generally unequipped to make out in modern America—a goodly proportion of them being Negroes.

Thus far the civil-rights movement, as a movement, has not in any definite or serious way addressed itself to the question of what is to be done once discrimination will no longer be the major issue. True, Bayard Rustin feels that the time has come for the movement to switch from protest to politics, and tells Warren: "I reject the idea of working for the Negro as being impractical as well as immoral if one does that alone." True, James Farmer defines integration as the "maximum opportunity for significant choices"—and by this he presumably means maximum opportunity for the maximum number of people. True, Martin Luther King, Jr. now speaks of a "Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged," much as for years Whitney Young has been speaking of a domestic Marshall Plan. Yet little has thus far been done to turn the civil-rights movement in this direction. But until the movement comes to terms with such larger problems, its leaders can be expected to remain on the spot, caught up in tactics and forced to supply rhetoric because victories become ever harder to achieve.

Up to now the biggest single victory the Negro has won, as Warren's book makes amply clear, is the moral strength to speak for himself. It is an important beginning—but it is only a beginning.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

WILLIAM PHILLIPS *is the editor of* Partisan Review. *His essay, "The New Immoralists," appeared in our April 1965 issue.*

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